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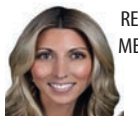
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QUOTE OF NOTE:

"It was not easy for an immigrant, but it was a welcoming environment. People would stop, even strangers, they would stop on the road and ask, "Where are you going? I'll drop you.'"

- Rachna Khanna

See story page 4

Glastonbury EMS crew members Melissa Cafazzo and Kyle Kulas make sure they'll be ready when a call comes in.

Photo by Brian Ambrose
See story page 28

4 Lovingly accepted
8 Local landscapers
12 Helping immigrants
15 Elite Karate returns
18 Where to find it
21 Students of the month
22 Creating global citizens
31 News roundup
32 People notes
33 Events spotlight
44 Event calendar
46 Slice of LIFE
57 Note from Nancy

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‘Lovingly accepted’

Indian community finds warm welcome in Glastonbury

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

Courtesy photo

Rachna Khanna dresses in traditional Indian clothes after the prayer ceremony for the Karva Chauth festival. In her hands is an Indian prayer Thali with a blue scarf that was given to her by her mother-in-law and has been in the family for more than 50 years. This scarf will be handed to her oldest daughter, Raveena, when she gets married and does her first Karva Chauth fast.

Rachna Khanna is used to funny looks when she tells people she had an arranged marriage to her husband, Parveen Khanna, a cardiologist and sleep specialist.

“[We’re] both immigrants. I came at the tender age of 22. I was a young immigrant. I came because I married him. He was here for higher education; he came for residency,” she said of her husband, whom attended medical school in India. “It was an arranged marriage. It’s the way it was done. We’re fine; we love each other; we’re very happy. It’s unlike the perception of the West. The way arranged marriage is done now is not the way it was done 100 years ago. It’s arranged by friends and family. It’s called a set-up for marriage. They set you up for boys. They set up after they’ve vetted for compatibility, for background, for what he does. Then they set you up to meet the person and if don’t like the person, you can say no. In modern India, city girls are never forced into marriage. You have the final say. We were set up by a mutual friend. We met and liked each other. We went out a couple of times. He was only there for a month and we were married within a month.”

The newly married couple moved to the United States, settling first in Manchester, where Rachna experienced a bit of culture shock.

“Initially, I didn’t have money to buy clothes,” she said. “A local friend introduced me to Marshalls and T.J. Maxx. I didn’t even have a winter coat. My husband was a doctor and we had $400 in our bank account. I used to walk from Manchester in the cold, in rain, in freezing weather to get to classes to learn how to type [at Manchester Community College]. I had never seen a computer. It was not easy for an immigrant, but it was such a welcoming environment. People would stop, even strangers, they would stop on the road and ask, ‘Where are you going? I’ll drop you.’”

The family includes three daughters, Raveena, who graduated magna cum laude from Tufts University and is now a first-year medical student at Creighton University Medical School in Omaha, Neb.; Rayva, who is a senior at Tufts University; and Ramona, a senior at Miss Porter’s School in Farmington.

Courtesy photo

Women gather at the home of Rachna and Parveen Khanna to talk and wait for the moon rise. The gathering includes attorneys, doctors, bankers, teachers and other professionals, but on this day they become Indian wives who carry on the traditions from India and enjoy being pampered by their husbands who wait on them all day and serve them food after the fast.

A garment designer in India, Rachna needed to turn to a new career in the U.S.

She earned an MBA from the University of Hartford in 2011, and is a candidate for a Juris Doctor degree at Western New England University School of Law in Springfield, where she expects to graduate this May.

“Working for the community is my passion and I want to use my law degree to help immigrants get legal immigration and am planning to start my own firm after I take the bar,” she said. Her family moved from Manchester to South Windsor, before settling in Glastonbury five years ago.

“I used to come here for the orchards. I would drive here for the apples, then I bought a property here, an investment property. Dave Cox, I call him a prophet, he’s a local architect, I told him want to build a

Courtesy photo

Men shout with happiness when the food is served, breaking the fast on Karva Chauth. In the United States most men fast along with their wives and food is only eaten after the moon rises. The first bite of food and first sip of water a fasting woman takes on that day is from the hands of her husband.

house. Dave said, 'Sure, I have this property in Glastonbury.' He climbs a tree, and said, 'Follow me,' and halfway up, he said, 'See, that's Hartford,'" she said. "He actually taught me how to love Glastonbury as a local. We started coming here way before we moved. I hired as many local people as I could get. It was their love of their town, every single person I met. It was contagious, it was like a disease."

A strong believe in green technologies, the Khanna's home features solar heat and hot water, bamboo floors, recycled woods and other earth-friendly touches.

Rachna, who ran for town council in South Windsor, has also been active in politics in town, but she said there's a different feel.

"It was very ugly in South Windsor. I lost by 17 votes. I was a little weary; I was hurt. The first year I joined the Republican Party in town, I was doing a 7 a.m. coffee run to deliver coffee to all the candidates in all the voting areas. As I was loading up my truck, they said, 'Give the Democrats coffee first.' The Democrats and the Republicans are friends. They're standing next to each other; they're joking with each other. That's what the beauty is of Glastonbury. We allow differences and diversity and accept it and don't make it ugly," she said. "That's what the draw of Glastonbury is. It's the acceptance of the diversity, the acceptance of difference. I think that's what makes any healthy democracy. It is the differences, the discussions that make a society grow."

She said that while Glastonbury has a strong Indian population, they are from various parts of India.

"Within India we have a lot of diversity; there are north Indians, there are south Indians. You can be from north India and not speak the language to the point where you have to speak English. It would be like Connecticut and Texas speak different languages, and have different clothes and traditions. We're drawing people from all different diverse parts of India," she said. "They're coming here because there's a connection. I just got a random call from someone Indian. The connections come from being Indian, not even knowing each other."

Khanna and her family will host gatherings at their home to celebrate festivals, sometimes adding modern twists to ancient traditions, such as downloading a prayer from YouTube.

Taranjeet Kapoor was born in New Delhi.

"My father a defense officer," she said. "My mother managed the home. I met my husband through family gatherings and married into a family of educators. We moved to Glastonbury in 2004 in search of providing a place to raise our kids in a loving community. We got the best – wonderful people, schools, nature, close to New York and Boston, we have family there."

After working as a full-time teacher for about 17 years, Kapoor has been a substitute teacher for more than 10 years with the Glastonbury public schools. Her husband, Charanjeev Singh Kapoor,

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is a hematologist/oncologist with the Eastern Connecticut Health Network. Their children went through the Glastonbury school system. Their daughter, Soyna, is in dental school at New York University and their son, Amitoj Singh Kapoor, is a student at UConn.

"We come from a Sikh heritage," Kapoor said. "We have about 10 Sikh families in Glastonbury. The main principles are believe in one God, equality of people, religious freedom, daily devotion to God, being thankful."

She said Sikhism is the fifth largest religion in the world and puts an emphasis on living a moral and ethical life. Because its male adherents wear turbans, she noted they can be the targets of hate crimes.

"I personally have not experienced any negative interaction, but family and friends in other states have been through some bad experiences. Which is really sad as we all are humans. Love and respect should prevail," Kapoor said.

While she finds she likes about life in town, there is one aspect that took some getting used to.

"The snowstorms in the winters are a bit of a challenge," she said.

But they're more than outweighed by the positives.

"The list is endless about what we love of Glastonbury. The community so lovingly accepted our family when we moved here, it is so heartwarming," she said.

And even though her son was the first Sikh boy with a patka (or small turban) most schoolchildren had encountered, "he felt at home," said Kapoor, who's grown to enjoy snowshoeing, skiing and snowboarding.

Bala Thiru first came to the United States in 1993 after growing up in Tamil Nadu, a southern state of India.

"[I] grew up in a very traditional, conservative, middle-class family [that] instilled values on strong education, mutual respect, hard work, hospitality, appreciation for the rich tradition of literature, art, music and dance. With a below -average single income of my father feeding 10 people in the family, we used to manage

Bala Thiru, a technology professional, lived in New Jersey and Florida before settling in Glastonbury.

living on minimal comforts but had a happy, contented and memorable childhood," he said.

An IT professional, he and his family first lived in New Jersey and Florida, before moving to Glastonbury in 2008. At the time, he was managing a lot of project work in Hartford for Accenture, a global consulting company. He joined Travelers Insurance in 2014 and moved to Cognizant Technology Solutions two years later.

His wife, Shailaja, is a therapeutic director at Glastonbury Healthcare Center. Their twin sons, Ganesh and Kumaresh, went to Glastonbury High School, graduated from Boston University and Villanova respectively, and are now pursuing careers as doctors.

"The reason we chose Glastonbury as our long-term home was because we found that though it is a big town, it has a quiet, calm and beautiful rural setting with lot of farmland. In addition, it has zero crime rate, easier access to downtown and highways, great restaurants, four seasons, great public school system and of course, very warm people," Thiru, who noted it was an easy adjustment to the state, said. "There were no challenges at all. In fact, we had such a smooth transition into the area because of our very loving and welcoming neighbors who showered us with New England warmth and affection. As an example, neighbors voluntarily offered help clearing the snow constantly in 2008

Courtesy photo

Women show off their hands with henna in traditional designs at a celebration of Karva Chauth held at the home of Rachna and Parveen Khanna in October 2016. Henna is usually done at the Mehendi ceremony of a bride before her wedding. Tradition says that the darker the henna, the more a bride's mother-in law will love her, so most young girls in India keep the henna on their hands overnight to get a dark shade. This ceremony is done at the Karva Chauth festival to celebrate a married life.

as we were new to winter season, coming from Miami, Florida, as you can imagine!"

He thinks there are a number of reasons that make Glastonbury a popular place for the Indian community.

"In general, Indians like to move to a place where there is a great public school system, low-crime rate, harmonious living environment, great access to highways, great acceptance of cultural diversity and a strong Indian community presence, and Glastonbury offers all that. Among Indians, Glastonbury town is portrayed as a very peaceful, harmonious and successful town to live as there are very successful doctors, engineers, businesspeople and politicians – the state and Glastonbury town – who are of Indian descent living already and well-established. Also, there are lot of IT professionals who work in [the] downtown area in insurance and healthcare companies," he said.

Thiru and his family make a point of being involved in the town, both formally and informally.

"We enjoy the company of our friends, great restaurants, community and other social activities, as well as [the] four seasons in Glastonbury. We are very actively involved in various community activities as my wife Shailaja is a board member in the [Town Center Initiative] of Glastonbury and I am the president of Milan Cultural Association, an Indian-American non-profit organization. Be it Strawberry Moon or Kidding around the Corner or Twinklin Pumpkins or Lighting the Center or any other community activities, you will see the sighting of me, my wife and kids or any one of us," he said.

Community involvement is also important for Rachna Khanna, who's volunteered for the Strawberry Moon, the Apple Harvest Festival, and even for the Democratic Party when a friend ran for a position in town.

"I do that because this is my town," she said.

She said she's always felt accepted in town.

"I am part of Glastonbury Rotary Club, that's as American as it gets, like me being in the Boy Scouts. They are very welcoming of what I bring to the club. I've never felt any resistance," she said.

She said her experience isn't unique.

"I don't think any Indian living here has ever experienced any way, shape or form of treatment that could feel different whether it's walking into the farms or volunteering at local events, to the point that people don't even react that you're different, they don't even acknowledge you're different, which is nice," she said.

She noted that sometimes there are cultural differences.

"In general it's a shy community," she said. "What people don't understand is culturally that's not how they were raised. If you're not raised a big city or it's not the schooling they were given, it's not normal for an Indian male in India to walk up to someone's wife or mother or daughter and hug them, as it's normal here. It's just shyness and fear. It's very different in own homes." **GL**

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Highlight Landscape & Design celebrates 10th anniversary

Company started by childhood friends

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

David Sansoucy and Matt Braiewa have known each other since they were kids, attending the same elementary school – Hebron Avenue School – and playing baseball together.

They both pursued careers in landscaping. Sansoucy worked for a variety of companies, while Braiewa ran a one-person shop that helped him make money to earn his degree from Eastern Connecticut State University, where he majored in political science with a minor in criminal justice.

They'd see each other at different events and they'd blue sky about starting a business with each other.

"It was always a topic of conversation. Eventually we said, 'Let's give it a shot," Sansoucy said.

Ten years ago – in 2006 – the men joined forces to form Highlight Landscape & Design, using the name that Braiewa had selected for his own lawn mowing service. At first, the two were the only employees.

While the company can now have as many as two dozen full-time workers during the busy warm weather months, Sansoucy said that their original mission hasn't changed.

"We want to be small enough to have connections with the customer. We want to be able to build a relationship with the customer. We still want to know them on a personal level. As we grow this gets trickier," he said. "We want to know their face. We live in town and when we see them in town, when we bump into them at Stop & Shop, at baseball games, we want to know them; we want to talk to them."

That's why they make an effort to be part of the day-to-day, hands-on work.

Skip Sansoucy is the father of David Sansoucy, who along with Matt Braiewa, owns Highlight Landscape & Design. Skip serves as the office manager for the company.

Photo by Mara Dresner

"We're still involved. We're out there working with the guys, from estimating to working on the job. I have to put my eyes on it, to meet with you. It's one-on-one," Sansoucy said.

Braiewa agreed.

"That's where the relationships are built. We're both in the field still. It's not like we sit in here all day," he said of their Oak Street offices.

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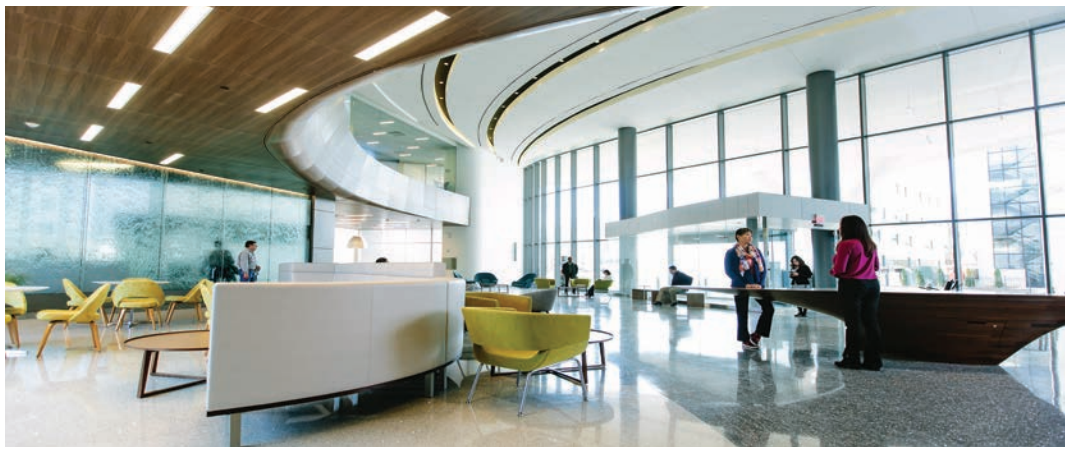

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He said when customers call, they usually end up speaking to one of the two owners.

"It's not like they dial through a huge phone tree," he said.

When the company started, they focused on lawn maintenance, such as mowing and leaf cleanup. They expanded into design work, such as patios and other outdoor spaces, including outdoor kitchens.

"That seems to be the new fad. Outdoor living spaces are huge. They've taken off in the last five years," Sansoucy said.

"People are taking the inside of their houses and extending it outdoors," Braiewa added.

That even includes items such as fire pits and pizza ovens.

"That's their weekend getaway. Some people are [choosing that] in lieu of a vacation. It's seen as an investment in their property, as an investment in their way of life," Sansoucy said.

He noted that even if people are inspired by high-end projects in magazines, they will work with the client to find a reasonably priced solution.

"People have a budget. We try to adapt to that; we try to offer options," he said.

During the winter the company does snow removal. They also offer some indoor services, such as fireplace veneers.

Nicole Neulander, a South Glastonbury resident, has used Highlight for landscaping work for three years and recently had the company do a large backyard remodel.

"They tore our old deck off and put in a rock wall with patio. They also put in an outdoor kitchen with a grill, side burner and smoker. Also, they installed an in-ground hot tub with patio," she said. "I was very impressed with the quality of work, how quickly the project was completed and the amazing personal service. They went above and beyond for us and I can't say enough. I could go on and on about these guys all day!"

Braiewa said that one of the biggest challenges of the business is the weather.

"One rain day can spiral. It's not like you're in an office," he said.

David Sansoucy (left) and Matt Braiew were childhood friends who formed Highlight Landscape & Design 10 years ago.

He said they value the relationships they've built.

"We have customers since the beginning," Braiewa said. "I enjoy the relationships. Working in the town you grew up in is kind of neat. I can see how a tree I planted 10 years ago has grown or a job you've done is where you envisioned [it would be]."

Sansoucy said that communication and honesty guide everything they do.

"We take pride in our work. We stand behind it," he said. "We don't want people to have the feeling that we took the job and ran. We want to be sure it's done right." **GL**

Learn more at highlightlandscape.com.

Why 3/4 of Homesellers Don't Get the Price They Want for Their Home

WETHERSFIELD - A new report has just been released which reveals 5 costly mistakes that most homeowners make when selling their home, and a 7 Step System that can help you sell your home fast and for the most amount of money.

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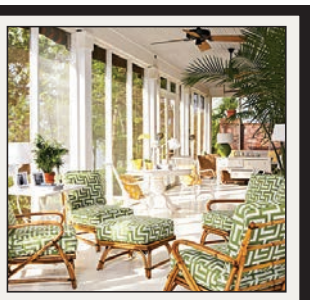

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Putting "love thy neighbor" into practice

"To slam the door on refugees is to slam the door on God"

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

While the whole country seems to be attuned to the issue of immigration lately, many in Glastonbury have long been focused on the topic.

"The greatness of this nation, and indeed the origins of this nation, are found in the yearnings of people of all races, nations, religions to live together and to work together for the common good in a land filled with opportunity and hope," the Rev. David Taylor, one of the pastors at First Church, Congregational, said. "The United States, symbolized by the Statue of Liberty, has been a country with a heartfelt 'Welcome home!' sign: 'Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.' In the faith community in our country, welcoming refugees and immigrants fleeing war, persecution and deprivation is not an option, but rather it is a mandate from God. From the Book of Exodus we read, 'You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien; for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.' In the Holy Qur'an, it states, 'We decreed for the children of Israel that whosoever saveth the life of one, it shall be as if he had saved the life of all mankind.' For people of faith, the welcoming of the stranger, the alien and the refugee has been fundamental to our understanding of what it means to love our God and to love our neighbor."

Congregants at First Church have been putting that into practice in a variety of ways.

"In our weekly worship at First Church, we seek to raise awareness about the needs of refugee and immigrant communities," Taylor said. "Last fall, First Church co-sponsored a family of seven from Syria who now live in Glastonbury. Our members continue to provide support to that family in the areas of education, employment, health care, social services, transportation and language tutoring. First Church continues to work with Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services (IRIS) of New Haven, a leading refugee resettlement agency, to support and outreach to refugee and immigrant communities in Connecticut. IRIS, on its own, is equipped, and does, resettle refugees from all over the world, to the greater New Haven area. But for decades now IRIS also partners with communities groups, such as faith communities, churches, synagogues, mosques, to settle individuals and families across the state. These co-sponsoring groups provide at least six months and sometimes longer, moral, financial and logistical support in the areas of housing, education, health care, language tutoring, social services, transpor-

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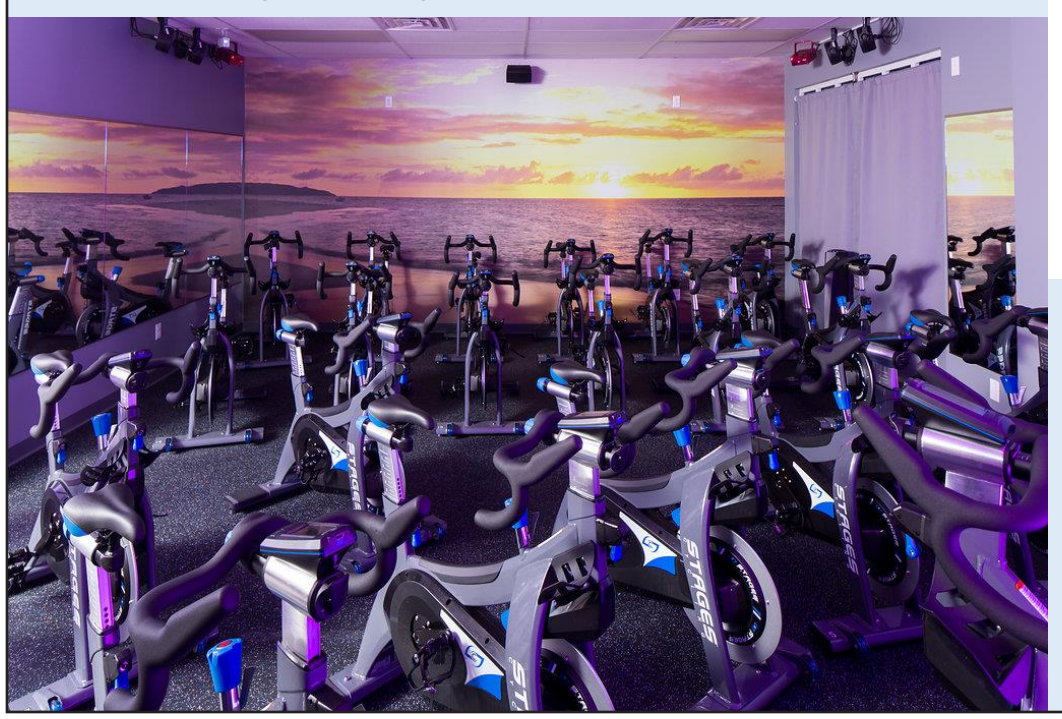

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tation, employment and so forth. Sometimes multiple faith communities come together to be a co-sponsor with IRIS. In our case, we are the sole co-sponsor of this family."

The Rev. Dick Allen, senior minister at the Congregational Church in South Glastonbury, also sees support of the immigrant and refugee communities as a Biblical imperative.

"From a faith perspective, the Bible teaches us that we are all sojourners; we have all come from some other place. Except for Native Americans, most of us came from Europe or Africa or Asia, Central and South America. The Bible writers compel us to welcome the strangers as we were once welcomed. It is in welcoming the stranger that we welcome God. To slam the door on refugees is to slam the door on God," Allen said. "Also, basic to our Christian faith is the teaching to love our neighbors. Jesus made it clear that our neighbors include all God's children. It's more than a suggestion; it's a commandment. To withhold love from the neighbors of the world is to withhold love from Christ."

The Congregational Church in South Glastonbury has been welcoming refugee

Photo by David Taylor

This sign was spotted outside a home in town.

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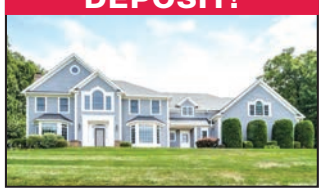

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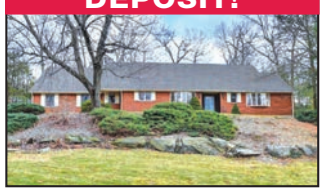

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As a starting point, check out these resources for more information and opportunities to donate time and/or money. Sites such as charitynavigator.org also list and rate charities that help refugees.

Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services, irisct.org

International Rescue Committee, rescue.org

HIAS, formerly known as the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, hias.org

Catholic Charities USA, catholiccharitiesusa.org

American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut, acluct.org

Muslim Coalition of Connecticut, muslimcoalitionct.org

International Institute of Connecticut, iiconn.org

National Immigration Forum, immigrationforum.org

families since the early 1980s.

"They have come from Vietnam, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Syria. Though we have blessed them with new homes and new lives and new hopes, they have blessed us with grace and mercy and peace. We are deeply moved by the plight of refugee families who have been traumatized and sometimes brutalized," Allen said. "Our faith requires us to do nothing less. We must welcome. We must love. We must live our faith traditions."

Leslie Ohta became involved with the refugee community when South Church co-sponsored a refugee family of six through IRIS. They are from Syria but were refugees in Jordan before coming to the U.S. last year.

"They are from Syria but were refugees in Jordan for about four years before arriving in the United States on August 12, 2016. My specific involvement with the Albukaai family includes dealing with issues involving the Social Security Administration and the Department a of Social Services, assisting Laila with employment opportunities in the tailoring and food catering fields, and, most importantly, serving as an honorary grandmother to the Albukaai children," Ohta said.

Leslie Ohta, a retired U.S. Department of Justice attorney, helped the family with Social Security and social services issues and employment and serving as an honorary grandmother to the family's children.

"I care deeply about the plight of refugees and of all peoples who are forced to live in countries where human rights abuses are commonplace," she said. "As American citizens and citizens of the world it is not only incumbent upon us to work for social justice, but it is rewarding in so many ways. As Martin Luther King, Jr. said, 'Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about the things that matter,' and '…injustice anywhere is injustice everywhere.'"

Allen said that getting to know our neighbors is at the heart of ending fear.

"Specifically, people can choose to get acquainted with their Muslim neighbors. There are countless opportunities to accomplish this," he said. "Many interfaith communities sponsor such conversations. Getting to know our Muslim neighbors is the most important thing we can do because when we get to know someone we no longer fear that person or that population."

Ohta said refugees need both sensitivity and practical assistance. "Refugees, perhaps now more than ever, need the emotional support of the community, as well as employment opportunities," she said. "The stress experienced by refugees who fled their country because they and their families were either persecuted, or threatened with persecution, based upon race, ethnicity, gender, or their political and religious beliefs, is virtually unfathomable. Added to that stress is the stress occasioned by being sent to a country with vast cultural differences, a different language, different food, and being at least initially dependent upon others, including the government, the sponsoring organizations, and the community, for housing, food, transportation, education and other basic human needs. Added to all of these stressors is the stress caused by the words and actions of President Trump which have a particularly odious and disturbing impact on Muslim refugees from Syria. There are many organizations which would welcome financial and volunteer help including churches and other places of worship."

Taylor said his church has been helping in a variety of ways.

"In response to recent governmental actions regarding refugees and immigrants, many members of the First Church family of faith are choosing to contact their elected officials, to march in protest, to reach out to Muslim neighbors to show our support and love and to work with area agencies that sponsor refugees attempting to find a new home here in the United States," he said. "There are so many ways that people can take action to show support for refugees and immigrants: Write letters to elected officials, contact the president, march, speak out, give financial resources, write letters to newspaper editors, reach out to neighbors who are from different faith communities. Working together as a community and as a nation, we can live out our country's motto, 'E Pluribus Unum.'" **GL**

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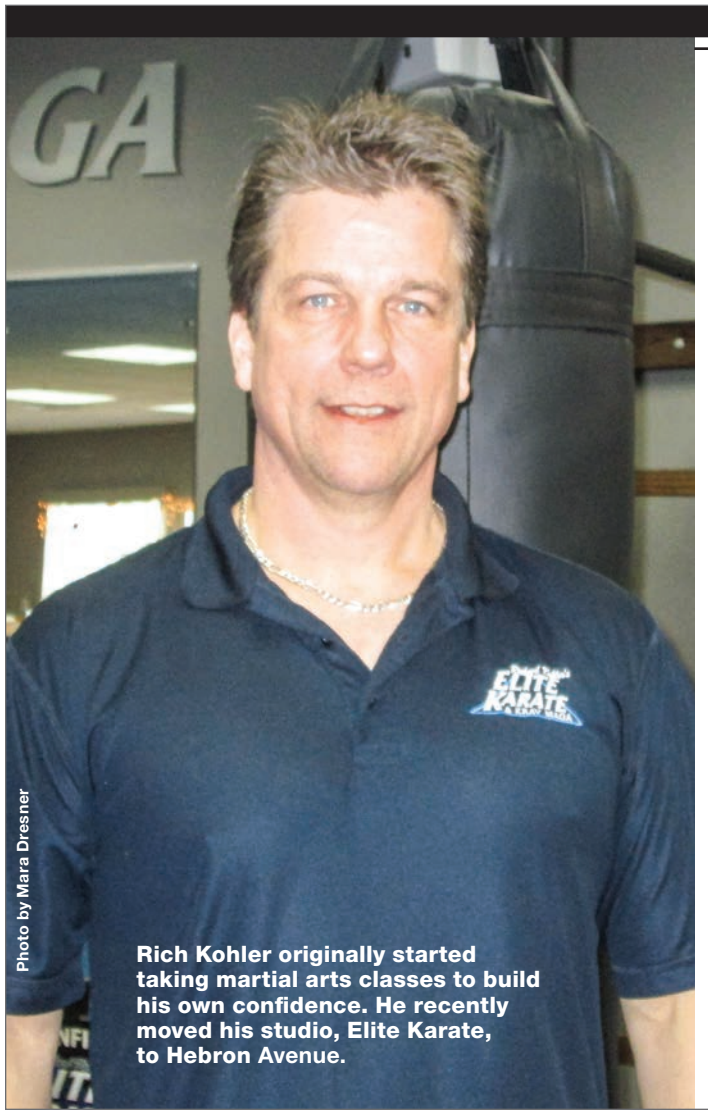

Photo by Mara Dresner

Rich Kohler originally started taking martial arts classes to build his own confidence. He recently moved his studio, Elite Karate, to Hebron Avenue.

Rich Kohler wants to 'release the warrior' in you

Elite Karate returns to Glastonbury

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

Rich Kohler knows what it's like to be the underdog. When he was a teen, he began martial arts training, a path that changed the course of his life.

"I was a shy kid. I wanted to learn how to protect myself and build my confidence. I walked in by myself into the school. I was a 16-year-old kid, and I guess at that time, the way I thought was if someone's going to mess with me, I want to be able to protect myself," said Kohler, who is originally from Vernon.

He took to it right away and found it changed his approach.

"At that time, it makes you kind of cool. I was more of a Robin Hood. I wouldn't really stand up for myself. I was always that kind of person who stand up for someone else," he added.

He began helping at the school and experienced a singular, defining moment after class one day.

"I had been helping to teach and a little boy around five years old, said, 'Thank you, sir, for teaching me.' That stuck in my head. I had never until then thought of myself as a mentor or a role model. I thought this is a way to help others," he said.

Kohler started living on his own at age 18 and early on, he had a big dream.

"I knew when I started teaching, I told my mother, I was going to own a school. She said, 'You have to go to college.' I said, 'This is my college.' It was more an entrepreneurial thing," he said, adding that he was inspired by people such as Steve Jobs and Bill Gates. "No matter

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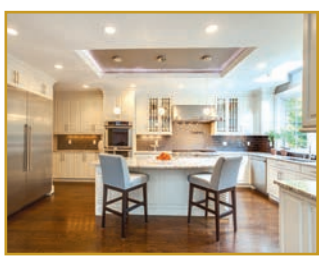

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what, it comes down to strong life skills, perseverance, experience and the confidence you can do this. Some people focus too much on academics and not on those life skills. The world is full of derelict geniuses."

Kohler's first goal was to teach full-time, which was uncommon in those days.

"When I started teaching, I worked odd jobs, at an auto body shop, a lumber yard, manual physical labor, just to pay the bills," he said. "My goal was to become a full-time instructor. I was at the largest school in the state at the time. There were 400 students and 10 instructors. Everyone was part-time."

He told the owner that he wanted a full-time position.

"I said, 'This is my career.' I didn't understand as a business owner how hard it is," he said.

He worked part-time at the school for three years.

"I remember my instructor pulling up to one of the work bays at the auto body shop. He said, 'It's time.' I was hired full-time at 24," Kohler said. He worked as the company's enrollment director and head instructor.

About three years later, he was ready to strike out on his own. He wanted to move to a different part of the state so he wouldn't compete with the school he was leaving. He opened his own martial arts studio in 1995 in the Putnam Bridge Plaza on the town line. After 10 years, leasing issues forced him to move just over the line to East Hartford, where he stayed for 11 years. In 2016, Kohler – who's lived in town for 17 years – decided to move the studio back to Glastonbury and opened Elite Karate on Hebron Avenue.

"We were looking for a location that really showed our brand of strength and excellence. It creates a mindset that is about inner and outer strength and excellence," he said. "Some people prefer to drop your kids off for an hour and go shop, but life skills have to be reinforced at home. It's much more than just kicks and punches. It requires a lot of work from the parents. That's why we don't have glass partitions. We want them [parents] to hear how we talk to their kids."

The studio offers a variety of classes for children and adults, including Krav Maga, which was developed by the Israel Defense Force.

Beyond the studio

Kohler has been training in various styles of martial arts for more than three decades. He is a sixth-degree karate black belt and has trained in and taught a variety of styles, including Kenpo, Wing Chun Kung Fu, Krav Maga and American Combatives.

A jarring personal experience years ago led him to expand beyond the typical studio offerings.

"When I opened my school and I had my first child, my son, about a year in, his mom and I split up. We had split and I almost lost my ability to see my son. I was notified that there were plane tickets and he would be gone the next day," Kohler remembered.

He reached out to some law enforcement contacts and ended up going into hiding with his son, eventually securing custody.

"It was like something right out of a holiday movie," he said, noting that they were featured in People magazine. "It just freaked me out and I was determined to become a child safety advocate."

One of his first endeavors was to create an award-winning Harry Potter-like video, called "Journey of the Steal-Proof Master." The video was designed to help children feel confident dealing with various types of scenarios.

"Knowledge is not worth anything if it's not applied. It's so easy to persuade a child," he said. "There are so many gray areas. We say, 'Don't talk to strangers,' but if you get lost in a store, who are you going to talk to? They need to learn to talk to people."

Kohler has now created a new program called Mission: Bully Proof, where he teaches seven categories such as conflict resolution and empathy. He also trains others to facilitate the program.

"It's more about preventing bullying as opposed to just putting a Band-Aid on it," he said. "Being a martial arts instructor, we're in the trenches on these things instead of sitting behind a desk talking about theories. We get kids ready to go to psych wards; we're dealing with the kids that are getting bullied, beat up at bus stops. We're in the trenches

with these kids now. That really gives us a lot of insight."

That doesn't mean that he advocates physical responses to bullying.

"When we train kids how to fight for real, we're training them to never fight. It should only be done to escape. You should do just enough karate to escape," he explained.

It's a similar stance for when he consults women in domestic abuse situations.

"I tell them, I can teach you how to be safe. If you're looking for justice, that's not what we do. There's a big difference," he said.

Kohler is open to both eastern and western traditions when it comes to developing his programs.

"We're taking the traditional aspects of martial arts, what we call the East, the orient type of discipline, respect and perseverance, and we're combining it with the West, the latest methods of teaching child psychology, neuro-linguistic programming. We're taking the East and combining it with the West. Even though we require the discipline of the East, we combine it with the motivation and teaching of the West," he said. "When people enjoy learning something, they're going to try harder. If you love what you're doing and having fun, you're going to try harder."

Kohler also has been working on developing programming to counteract the effects of "toxic stress," whether that's in the law enforcement community or with high school students.

"You have a kid in high school who's throwing chairs and beating up teachers. Your first reaction is the consequences, 'You're suspended.' That just won't work. The children are now hardwired. They've been hurt; they've been damaged. They're now hardwired to fight or flight. They can't deal with just punitive consequences. I think I can relate to those kinds of kids," he said. "You're not going to intimidate me physically. I have a 6th degree black belt. I've trained SWAT teams and military. Fighting isn't cool; I don't like to hurt people. There are alternative things we can do. You have to create an environment of love and encouragement."

Peggy France, a law enforcement officer from Cromwell whose son takes lessons at Elita Karate, has seen multiple sides of Kohler's program.

"What sold me on the program was it's more than just self-defense. They tie in academics; they tie in social learning skills, the way they have to treat each other with respect and fairness. It's bigger than martial arts. It truly is a school; it's not just lessons," she said.

When children do well on their report cards, for example, they get a star.

"It's a reward that's almost like a varsity letter," she said. "It's more than they just go to karate every Saturday."

France also appreciates Kohler's work to help keep kids safe.

"My specialty is crimes against children. What I find interesting is his fascination for kids and the way their brains work. He always try to step up his game to motivate and understand them," she said.

Kohler believes that martial arts can be of value to every age. While he recently taught a self-defense class to a group of 30 women, he knows that for many of them, it was a one-time class, and he's trying to find ways to incorporate self-defense techniques into a lifelong fitness program.

"I'm launching a new program that's going to be jamming. It's bridging the gap between real world self-defense and cardio kickboxing," he said. "I wanted to create a program that was fitness without being totally fitness like cardio kickboxing."

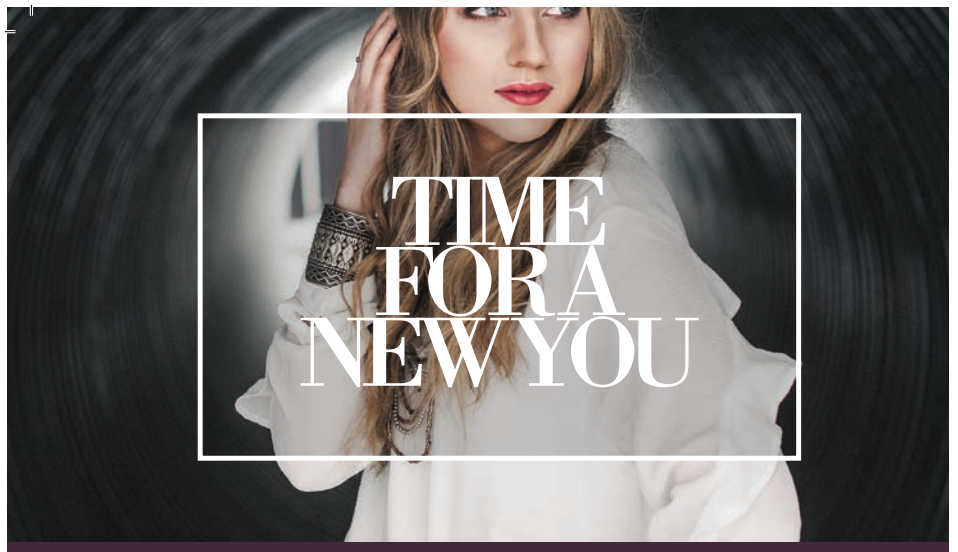
It's called MyFitDefense.com and debuted in January. Kohler said it's about using natural instincts and tools, rather than specific combinations of moves.

"You're going to creatively choose what tools to use. You're coming up with the right solution. This is pretty deep stuff," he said. "This is a way to empower people. It's for special needs kids, it's for seniors. You can release the warrior inside whether you're a five year old or a 75 year old."

Kohler noted that he brings a unique perspective to teaching.

"Because I was a shy kid, I can relate to every kid and even adults who have low confidence," he said. "It worked for me and it changed my life." **GL**

Learn more at elitekaratect.com.



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BRISTOL **$135,900**
3BR/1.1BA Brick Cape w/ fenced yard, patio, 1 car gar & enclosed breezeway. Lg closet & attic storage. Newer remod'd 1st flr bath. Some new windows. Finished basement. Side-walk nbrhd in walking distance to Greene Hill Elementary School & shopping.
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COLUMBIA **$525,000**
3BR/2BA Cape selling in conjunction w/adjacent 60.3ac! Newer siding & gutters, full bsmnt w/walk out. 18.5ac have been farmed for 30+ yrs & offers fertile soil to produce yearly crops. Remaining wooded 45.3ac boasts hunting grounds & valuable lumber.
SARAH MARTIN **860-539-7726**

EAST HARTFORD **$225,000**
3BR/2.1BA dormered cape. New front & screen door. 12yr old roof. Kit w/new apps, countertops & b'fast bar. HW flrs thruout 1st level. Part. fin LL. New W&D. C/Vac, New Weil Mclain boiler. Patio, fire pit & awning. Fenced yard. Shed. 2 car garage.
ALISON SEGDA **860-729-1749**

EAST HARTFORD **$139,900**
Multi-Family with three units all rented month to month. Hardwood floors underneath carpets. All units with separate utilities, washer and dryer hook ups in all units. Large yard and ample parking. This property is being sold 'as is.'
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EAST HARTFORD **$48,900**
2BR/1BA Easy one floor living! Large EIK w/ new floor & breakfast bar open to LR. New carpets, freshly painted. MBR w/ dble closets. Lg remod'd bath, full size W/D. Covered porch & lg private deck area. Corner lot, Storage shed. Monthly lot fee $471.
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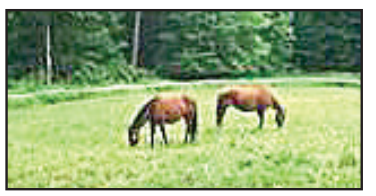
HADDAM **$159,900**
3BR/1BA Ranch, set back off the road, offers privacy on a rear lot. Easy one flr living just needs some TLC. 2 gas stoves to help w/ elec. heat. Lrg FR & workshop in lower level. BRAND NEW ROOF on home & shed 12/2016. Estate sale being sold 'as is.'
JODYSMAGLIS.COM **860-573-2090**



HAMPTON **$449,000**
23+ ac horse property. Indoor riding arena w/ heat/ac viewing room & attached barn w/ 14 stalls incl. a wash stall. Barn has bathroom w/ laundry. Sand rink. 6 fenced pastures. Business opp for boarding horses. The house is a 3BR/1.1BA raised ranch.
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HEBRON **$269,900**
3BR/2BA year round ranch at Amston Lake. Double lot. Move in ready. LR/DR w/ HW flrs, fieldstone fp & wall of sliders & wndws looking out to the lake. MBR suite w/ loft, wrap around deck, lrg closets. New AC & Propane Furnace. Crawl space & storage.
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Beautiful 4BR/3.1BA Victorian at end of cul de sac. Front porch. HW floors thru-out. Lrg, sunlit open kitchen. French doors to priv. backyard w/ gazebo. LR has fireplace w/ custom mantle. Fully finished basement w/ full bath for extra bedroom/inlaw.
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MANCHESTER **$145,000**
3BR/1.1BA Col in nice neighborhood w/ lg open kitchen, sliders off dining area lead to deck w/ fenced in yard. Lg LR w/ beautiful bay window & fp. Fin basement w/ bar & Jacuzzi tub. 2 car garage. Convenient to local restaurants, shopping & medical.
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VERNON **$185,000**
3BR/1.1BA L-shaped ranch offers one floor living. Cathedral ceilings & skylight in DR. Lrg LR. Recently remod'd kit w/granite, tile backsplash & SS appliances! LR & BRs w/ HW flrs under carpets. Enjoy nearby Valley Falls park & Rails to Trails!
SARAH MARTIN **860-539-7726**

MARLBOROUGH **$724,900**
4BR/4BA Cape, 1st flr MBR suite, porch, stone patio & Trex deck! Indoor heated granite pool, 6 stall horse barn, carriage house, smoke house, 55' lake frontage, gran & SS kit, flr to ceil stone fp in LR. Set upon apprx 2.79ac on Lake Terramuggus.
GINAMLAVERY.COM **860-869-2148**

MARLBOROUGH **$469,900**
4BR/3.1BA Col on approx 1.8 private / wooded acres w/ fabulous views. Gourmet kit w/ granite, SS & bkfst bar open to FR. 9' ceil, HW flrs & crown moldings. MBR w/ walk-in closet & whirlpool bath. Fin walk-out LL w/ FR & full BA. In-law potential.
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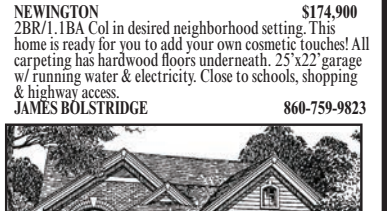
NEW BRITAIN **$85,000**
2BR/1.1BA Cape. Great investor opp! Move in ready! Deck & fenced in backyard. EIK, DR & lg entertainment room all w/ tile & HW flrs. Open flr pln. BRs w/ walk-in closets & vaulted ceilings! Partially fin basement. This property is being sold as is.
SARAH MARTIN **860-539-7726**



NEWINGTON **$174,900**
2BR/1.1BA Col in desired neighborhood setting. This home is ready for you to add your own cosmetic touches! All carpeting has hardwood floors underneath. 25'x22' garage w/ running water & electricity. Close to schools, shopping & highway access.
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NEWINGTON **$286,900**
2BR/2.1BA Townhouse in Newington Ridge built in 2008. Open floor plan. Triple crown molding in open LR/DR. Kit w/ center island, breakfast bar, granite countertops & pantry, opens to two-story great room. Ample closet space in BRs & 2nd flr laundry.
KATE KELLEHER **860-944-3695**

SOUTH WINDSOR **$399,900**
3BR/2.1BA Contemp, Split level w/ opn flr pln. EIK. LL has theater rm, additional bedroom, recreation or play room. Laundry room and lots of storage. Master has huge closet and master bath. Updated bath on main level. Pub Utils & Nat. Gas. C/Air
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SOUTH WINDSOR **$289,900**
4BR/2BA Ranch. HW flrs, lg updated kit. DR w/ garden window & french doors lead to sunroom / office. FR w/ dry bar & woodstove. 2 tiered deck leading to ingrnd pool. Fenced yard. CVAC, CAIR, 3 zone heat, paver driveway. Close to Orchard Hill School.
JODYSMAGLIS.COM **860-573-2090**

WEST HARTFORD **$264,900**
3BR/3.1BA remod'd in 2007! LR w/ HW flrs, flr to ceil field stone fp & built in aquarium. 4 seas heated sun rm. Remod'd kit w/ b'fast bar. 20 X 11 trex deck! 2 car gar, fenced yard, storage shed & outdoor entertainment room with electricity!
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Students of the month

Congratulations to Hebron Avenue School's Powerful Programming Penguins

When Hebron Avenue School Principal Linda Provost was asked to nominate a student of the month, she immediately named not one, but 11, all members of the school's LEGO team, which won an award for its core values at a LEGO robotics competition sponsored by the FIRST LEGO League.

The students, from grades 2, 4 and 5, were honored for core values of cooperation, working to find solutions, learning together, honoring the spirit of friendly competition, valuing discovery over winning, sharing, displaying "gracious professionalism and coopertition" – a word describing a combination of cooperation and competition – in all that they do, and having fun.

The team, made up of second-grader Martha Smith, fourth-graders Luke Moya, Braeden Fink, Rishi Boggavarapu, Luke Smith, Cathy Williams, Tyler Lewis, Frankie Dejianne, Jill Williams and Lincoln Chandonnait, and fifth-grader Max Jiao, decided to help protect African penguins as its challenge for the competition.

Under the guidance of parent-coaches Wendy Smith and Trina Williams, the children learned about penguins from books and online, by meeting an African penguin at the Mystic Aquarium and by Skyping with a penguin rescue organization in South Africa, all with the goal of helping penguins avoid getting tangled in trash and drowning and also from eating trash, which can be fatal. According to the aquarium, the African penguin population has declined by 70 percent in the past 10 years.

Six team members attended the tournament, which was called Farmington Flood and took place at Farmington High School. GL

Students of the month (left to right: Luke Moya, Braeden Fink, Rishi Boggavarapu, Luke Smith, Cathy Williams and Martha Smith.

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Becoming global citizens

Local schools are leaders in international exchanges

by Nancy Thompson
Editor

It's not uncommon for high school students to participate in trips to foreign countries to learn about another culture and hone their language skills. But here in Glastonbury, students have been traveling throughout the world – and hosting foreign students – for nearly 30 years.

The exchange programs started in 1989 with a trip to Lvov, in the Ukraine in the Soviet Union, shortly after the Berlin Wall came down.

The town's Russian language program, which started in the 1950s, was well known in the U.S.

"Every Russian pedagogue in the U.S. knew about our Russian program, said Christine Brown, who was the local school system's director of foreign languages and English language learning when the exchange program began. "Reagan and Gorbachev wanted to foster deeper relations, and Glastonbury was contacted by the director of the American Council on the Teaching of Russian, who urged us to apply for a federal grant."

In 1989 Glastonbury High School was one of the first seven American public schools to do an exchange with the then-Soviet Union, visiting Lvov, in the Ukraine.

"That began a long history of very useful exchanges," Brown said.

Visitors on that very first trip included school Superintendent Alan Bookman, who at that time was principal of Glastonbury High School.

"Our country was going through a new spirit of cooperation with Russia," Bookman said. "I was invited, along with nine other high school principals, to attend a 10-day trip to Moscow to observe high schools and teaching methodology. Our students were scheduled to go on their exchange shortly after I arrived in Moscow. They were going to the Ukraine to a school in Lvov. Before going to Lvov, they landed in Moscow and spent a couple days touring. I actually ran into them at Red Square. They then left for the Ukraine. A couple days later, the Russian government flew me to Lvov to be with them for three days. The airplane ride on Aeroflot was rela-

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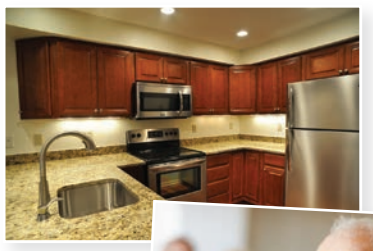

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Local students visited Toledo
as part of their trip to Spain last spring.

“Our country was going through a new spirit of cooperation with Russia ...”

– Superintendent Alan Bookman

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tively scary. You needed to lift yourself up by your arms to get into the plane. I think I did a good deal of praying throughout that very bumpy ride. I slept in the home of one of the exchange teachers, and spent three of the most exhilarating non-stop days of my life. The school administration and local politicians brought me to every sight in the town, all of their cultural events and very special dinners held in governmental palaces. I publicly spoke at a number of events. Our hosts were as hospitable as they could be, and they were honored that our students, their teachers and their principal were visiting their school in Lvov."

Lynne Campbell, who taught Russian here for many years and accompanied students on about 20 trips, recalled a conversation with a student on one of those early exchanges.

"I remember a student asking me why I had brought her to the Russian-speaking eastern part of Ukraine for a month-long exchange," she said. "'After all,' she stated, 'they are kind of poor here and there is a lot of litter in this city.' I paused a moment before answering her question and then asked her about her host family's apartment and how she was getting along with her Ukrainian 'sister'. Her responses were enthusiastic and positive. She absolutely loved their generous nature and constant efforts to make her stay comfortable but felt sorry for their daily struggles with water shut offs, intermittent Internet, and escalating food prices. 'Therein lies your answer,' I said gently. 'You are lucky to have been born in the wealthiest nation in the world and need to see how other people in the world live. In one month you get to leave here to return to Glastonbury."

"It's one of the most robust exchange programs in the country."

– Rita Oleksak, director of foreign languages and English language

Today, in addition to exchanges with Russian students, local high school and middle school students travel to – and host students from – Spain, France, Italy and China.

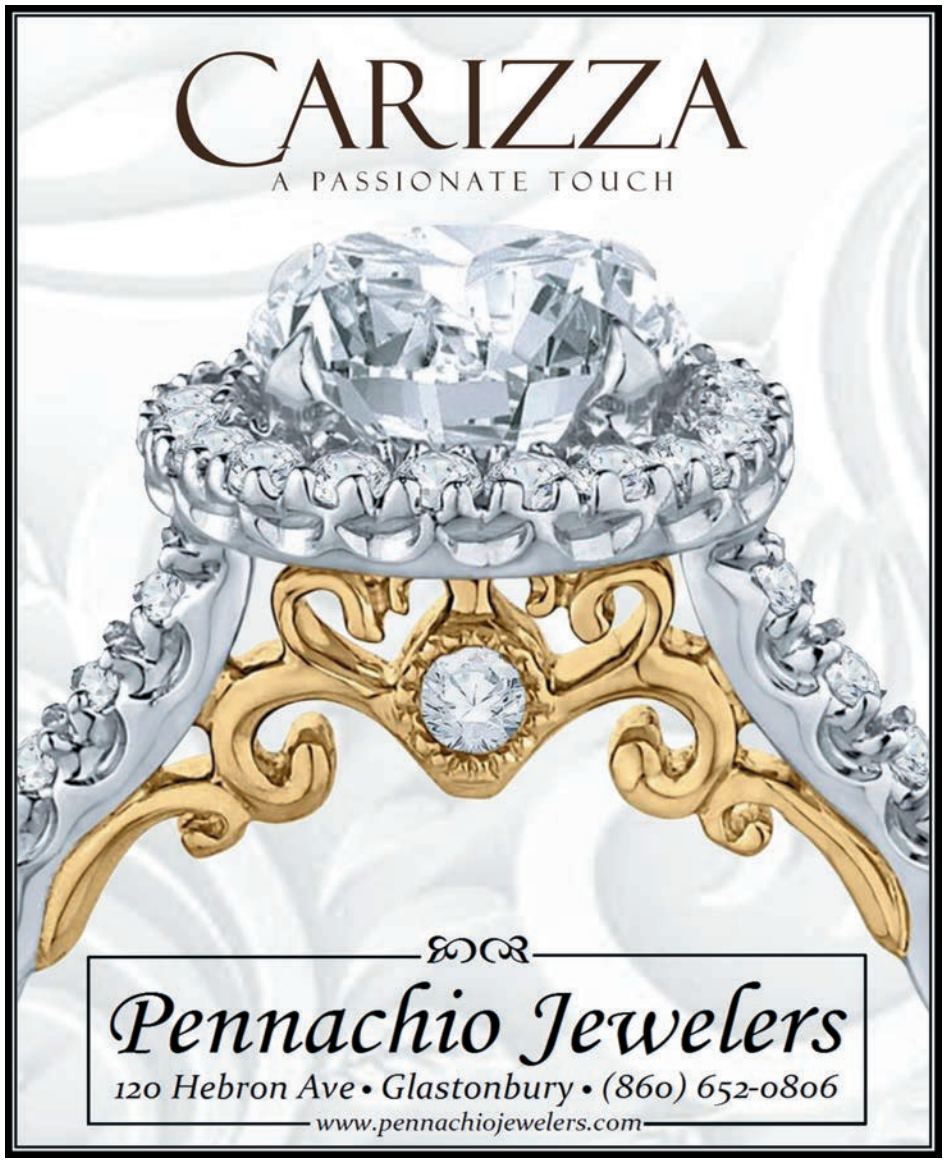
"It's one of the most robust exchange programs in the country," said Rita Oleksak, the director of foreign languages and English language learning for the town's schools. "It's very different to have two-way reciprocal exchanges."

Often, the exchanges have started from a personal connection. Students participate in exchanges with St. Petersburg, Russia because the mother of a young dancer who performed here as part of a cultural program in 2006 asked Oleksak if she was interested in starting an exchange.

Barring unforeseen complications, local students will travel to Russia this month. Student safety is always a primary concern. A few years ago a trip was canceled amid government advisories. "It was such a hard decision," Oleksak said. "But they know the board of education reserves the right to cancel a trip at any time."

Local students have been doing exchanges with French students for 21 years. A group from Dinard, in northwest France, is due here this month, and local students will visit there in April.

That exchange came about because Corinne Lucas, a Frenchwoman, worked with Brown



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at that time and had become friends with many of the French teachers here.

The exchanges with a school in Madrid were so popular that a second school has been added.

Local students have been visiting and hosting students from the Number One Tai'an school in Shandon Province, Connecticut's sister state, in China since 2005.

"We're amazingly excited about China," Oleksak said. "They're trying to make connections around the world. We've seen huge changes since just before the [Beijing] Olympics."

This year the town is sending 17 students and three teachers to Tai'an, and local students will be hosting 22 Chinese students and four teachers.

Latin students are involved in exchanges with the Liceo Classico e Linguistico Statale Aristofane in Rome.

These trips are about much more than sightseeing. Student study the culture and history of the country they will visit and often get to know their hosts through email, Facebook and other social media, and the trips themselves include visits to cultural and historical landmarks.

Michela Gerardin, a GHS senior who visited France, loved learning more about the country's history.

"The best part about being in France was the historical experience," she said. "Versailles, the Louvre, Pointe du Hoc – each of these places told a tale of France's long and incredible history and left me in awe of my surroundings."

"The kids really enjoy hosting and traveling and making friends in

Recent Glastonbury High School graduates Nina Maitland, Cailin Brady and Emma Newquist (front) and Rachel Zlotnick, Owen Lee, James Buckley and Ziv Kaputa, visited Russia in the spring of 2015.

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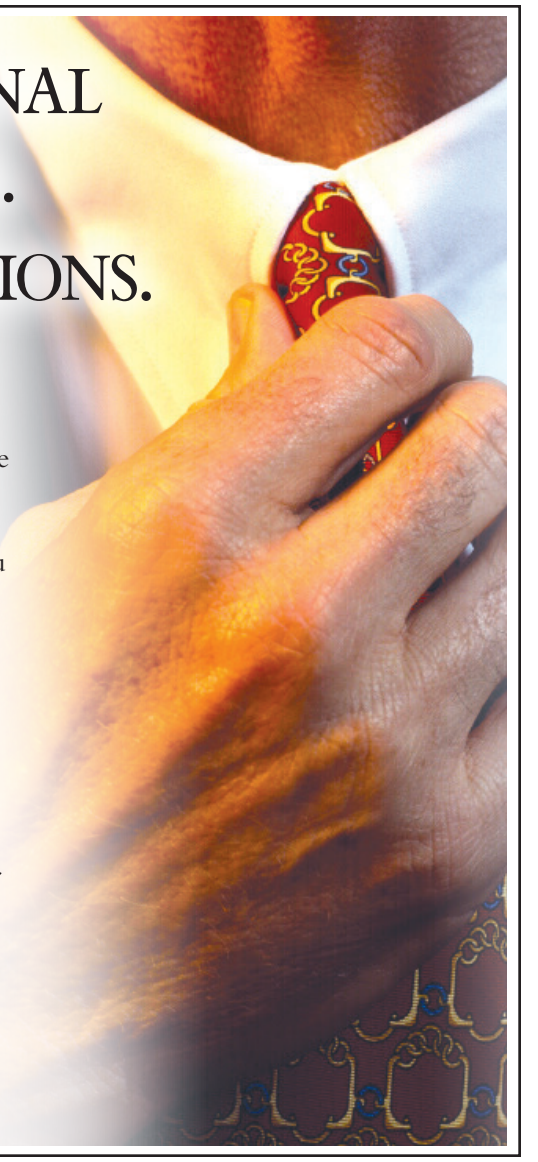

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that country," said Janice Eklund, a Russian teacher. "Students tell us how wonderful the people were and what a great experience it was. For many it was a defining moment and they decided to study Russian in college and become the global citizens we want them to be."

Eklund recalled a comment from a student who will be going to Russia this year.

"She remembered when she was in sixth grade at Gideon Welles School and some older kids went to her class to talk about St. Petersburg," she said. "She saw photos and decided she would sign up for Russian so she could go there." The student, now a junior, was part of a group that visited Gideon Welles this year to encourage sixth-graders to sign up for Russian next year.

The exchanges offer plenty of opportunities for friendship and fun. Students who are visiting Russia this year were hosts in September. Here are some of their comments.

Becca Szumski: "The coolest thing that we did when I was hosting was we went to the Statue of Liberty. We went all the way up the crown, which was a fun experience. Also, my exchange student, Vlad, was very interested in taking photos so he enjoyed taking pictures with Lady Liberty. Afterwards we went to Ellis Island and walked through the museum. I really enjoyed being able to share our history with him. The hosting experience was really fun and I can't wait to see him again when I go to Russia.

"They are some of the nicest, friendliest, and most fun people I've ever met."

– Trina Cubanski

Paige Lee: "I found out how similar teenagers are around the world, but at the same time I got to learn about the unique and rich Russian culture."

Trina Cubanski: "I made a bunch of new friends and I love them all. They are some of the nicest, friendliest, and most fun people I've ever met. A lot of the time we were just hanging out together and talking about our lives, but it was honestly my favorite part, and even better than the trips to New York."

Oleksak said the exchanges empower the students.

"It's personally rewarding to see the kids using the language and interacting with kids from other cultures on a daily basis and being comfortable," she said, adding that the program helps fulfill the department mission of "cultivating students' understanding and appreciation of other cultures as well as their own and empowering them to communicate and participate successfully as informed citizens in a global society."

Campbell looked back on the program and the way it has grown.

"What we learned is that people there were just like people here and that our similarities far outnumbered our differences," she said. "We both loved our families, music, and hanging out with friends. We worked hard at school and extracurricular activities. Maybe the visiting students' clothing was distinguishable with that first exchange. Nowadays with students from France, Spain, China, and Italy staying with host families in Glastonbury even that trait is no longer visible. We have become a melting pot of travelling ambassadors." GL

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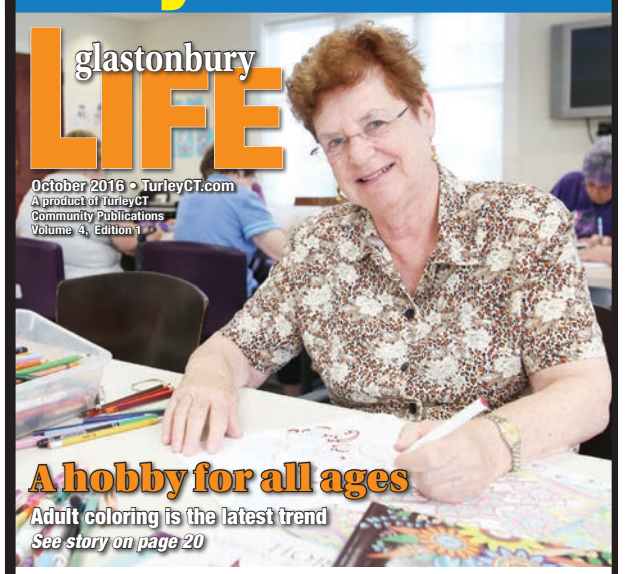
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Glastonbury EMS celebrates 60 years

Glastonbury Volunteer Ambulance Association started with a bread truck

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

The Glastonbury Volunteer Ambulance Association's first emergency vehicle was a bread truck. The group has come a long way in the past 60 years.

When the association was formed in 1957, it consisted of 20 men from the Glastonbury Police Department in conjunction with Civil Preparedness and the Auxiliary Police Force.

"Shortly after that, it became its own entity. It started with an old bread truck as an ambulance in this little tiny building in the back of the police department," Glastonbury EMS Chief Russell Hahn said. "Back in those days, [responders] could come in from their homes."

Through the years the association has undergone numerous changes, including updating to modern ambulances and advanced training. In 1994 the association received approval from the town to charge for services. Only individuals who are transported by an ambulance service are billed for services. There is no charge if there is no transport.

Although the service is staffed largely by volunteers, there are some employees to help ensure 24/7 coverage. In December 2014, the group submitted the paperwork to become Glastonbury EMS. Its building, constructed by the town in 1992, has three ambulance bays, two bunk rooms, a kitchen, a sitting area, an office and a training room, which is used by various town agencies.

Hahn said that back in the early 1980s, the service responded to about 300 calls a year.

"When I started it was around 1,600," he said. "It's almost doubled in the last 16 years, and it's growing at a rate of between eight and 10 percent a year."

Glastonbury EMS responds to approximate 3,000 calls for medical assistance each year, with about 70 percent of calls requiring transportation to the hospital. Last year, there were 3,414 calls.

Hahn sees several reasons for the increasing number of calls.

"I think part of that is the aging population, part is the population has increased. We have a lot of doctors' offices in town. People are living longer. As they're living longer they need more care."

He estimated that 60 percent of their calls involve elderly residents for issues such as falls and cardiac issues.

Hahn's background is in heating,

Glastonbury EMS crew member Melissa Cafazzo prepares gear for the next call.

Brian Ambrose photo

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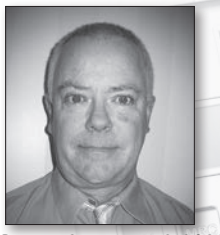
Matthew Hill
CPA, CLU/CHFC

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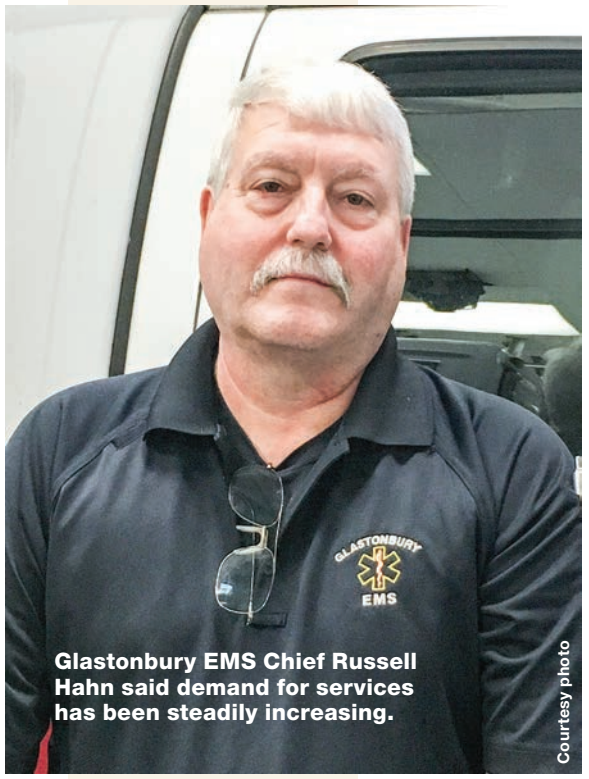
Glastonbury EMS Chief Russell Hahn said demand for services has been steadily increasing.

Courtesy photo

Glastonbury EMS crew member Kyle Kulas prepares gear for their next call.

Brian Ambrose photo

ventilation and air conditioning. He had sold his business and although he was doing various maintenance jobs, he was looking for new challenges.

"At that time, I had plenty of time on my hands. I wanted to do something to help the community," he said. "The fire department seemed to have enough people and the ambulance needed people, so that's how I got involved. I became president here in 2006 and then they were looking to bring on a paid chief position."

While in the early days volunteers would be called in from home or work, that's no longer the case.

"Everybody who works here, stays here. It's not like they come from home. When they're working here, they stay right at the building. Our out-of-the-building times are under four minutes," Hahn said.

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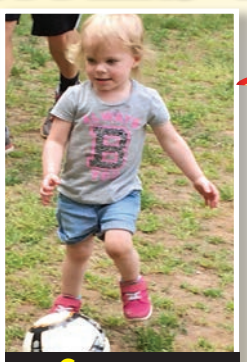
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He said volunteers come from a variety of backgrounds, including nurses, businesspeople and those studying for careers in the medical profession.

"It's a diverse group. I think they like the patient care aspect of it, taking care of people and making a difference," he said.

Early ambulances were much different from today's modern designs.

Glastonbury EMS is always recruiting for new volunteers, including people to work on truck maintenance and the bike team, which was started three years ago and mostly covers events.

For photographer John Ryan, who is an emergency medical technician and a member of the group's board of directors, volunteering fulfilled a dream dating back to his college days.

"When I was in college, I had a roommate who was an EMT and I used to read [the materials] and he would tell me stories. It just kind of sat with me and sat with me and sat with me, and one day I decided to take the EMT class," said Ryan, who graduated from college in 1978 and lives in East Hartford. "I didn't start this as a kid. I'm not using it as a stepping stone."

"East Hartford doesn't have any volunteer EMS program. I have my own business and did not want to go into commercial EMS. I heard good things and talked to Chief Hahn, and determined this was the place I wanted to volunteer," he said.

Ryan, who also volunteers in Suffield, enjoys the variety of the work.

"No day is the same. You never know what you're going to have to deal with. Everyone is unique, every problem is unique. We do a fair amount of lift assistance, where people fall down and have trouble getting back up. It's not just that we pick them up and put them back in the chair and everything is fine. Every case is unique, every person is unique. That's what makes it interesting. It's constantly changing, nothing is ever the same," he said.

That might mean shoveling a path to the ambulance when snow has fallen quickly while he's been inside helping a patient.

In addition to helping residents in their hours of crisis, Glastonbury EMS gives back in other ways, whether that's offering cardiopulmonary classes, holding food drives for the food pantry, raising breast cancer awareness or ensuring that the town complies with the requirements to be a HEARTSafe Community.

"Glastonbury EMS is committed to the town wholeheartedly. We're there for the town," Ryan said.

You'll find them at many events, as well as making trips to schools and daycares to help familiarize kids with the ambulances.

"We bring the ambulances and let the kids climb in them, so they're a lot less scary. They climb all over them, sit on the stretcher. It helps lessen the stress. One kid we picked up, his mom says, 'He loves go in the ambulance.' He had the familiarity, so it wasn't such a strain on him," Ryan said of a time when a family had a medical emergency.

The group's mission statement is simple: "To provide the best emergency medical care to individuals within the Town of Glastonbury."

"We're here when you need us," Hahn said. **GL**

Learn more, including information about how to join Glastonbury EMS and 60th celebration plans, at gvaa.org.

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News roundup

Property tax relief available

The town's social services department and the assessor's office are accepting applications for state and local tax relief programs.

Veterans who are receiving a veteran's exemption may be eligible to receive increased benefits by applying for the Additional Veterans Program. Income limits are $35,200 for single people and $42,900 for married couples. Proof of income must be filed, and applications will be accepted through September 29.

Homeowners or their spouses age 65 and older or who have been granted 100 percent Social Security disability, may qualify for a state program with an income limit of $35,200 for single homeowners and $42,900 for married couples, and for a local tax relief program if their income is less than $56,890. Residents who qualify for the state program also may apply to defer their taxes on an annual basis subject to a nominal interest rate.

A copy of form SSA-1099 for 2016 is required. In addition, if an applicant has filed income taxes for 2016 a signed copy of the federal income tax form is required. Applicants who are not filing income taxes must submit copies of all 1099 forms for 2016. Applications must be submitted no later than May 15.

To learn more, request an application or make an appointment, call the social services department at 860-652-7634. Anyone who is filing federal income tax should not make an appointment until their taxes are done.

Old GHS yearbooks received

Gus Constantine has donated several Glastonbury High School yearbooks to the Historical Society of Glastonbury. Constantine, who has been collecting yearbooks for several years and had previously donated some yearbooks from the school's early years, recently donated books for 1940 through 1944, 1947, 1951 through 1954, and 1956 through 2013. Those donations, along with books dropped off by others during the past 10 years, bring the society's collection nearly to completion.

The society is missing yearbooks for 1929, 1948 and 2012 through 2016. Anyone who would like to donate one or more may contact Bennett at 860-633-6890.

Deadline for summer jobs is coming up.

Applications for summer jobs with the town's parks and recreation department are due March 3. Applications received after that date will be accepted but considered only when positions are not filled by applicants who submitted the forms by the deadline.

Details are available at the department's page on the town's website, Glastonbury-ct.gov.

School board honored

The Glastonbury Board of Education has received an award for communications for its2016-2017 budget. The award was based on the budget document's readability, design, editing and overall design layout.

Robert J. Rader, executive director of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, presented the award to the board at a recent meeting.

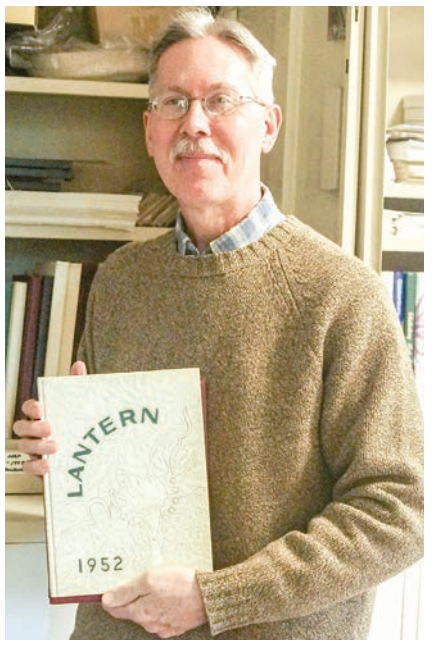
Revaluation under way

Vision Government Solutions Inc. will work with the assessor's office to revalue local property. The last revaluation was completed in 2012, and state law requires town to revalue property every five years. The revaluation will determine the fair market value of all commercial and residential properties in town.

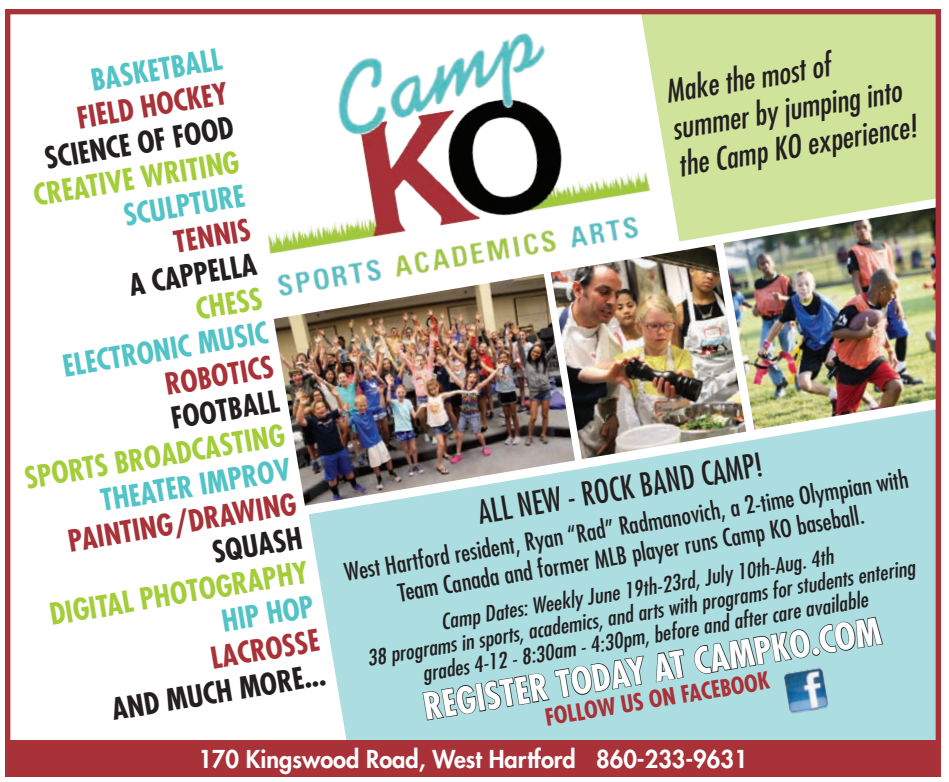
Typically, a revaluation requires several steps, including physical inspections of properties, an analysis of market sales, a field review in which the company's personnel drive through town and review all properties to update the assessor's database, and informal hearings to give property owners an opportunity to discuss valuations and other information with company personnel.

Vision Government Solutions personnel have started their inspections. They carry identification and their cars have an "Assessor's Office" sign in a window and are registered with the local police department and the assessor's office.

Anyone who has questions about the revaluation process or needs additional information may contact the assessor's office at 860-652-7600. Updates and information also can be found on the assessor's office section of the town website, Glastonbury-ct.gov. GL



Jim Bennett, director of the Historical Society of Glastonbury, displays a copy of the 1952 Glastonbury High School yearbook.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People Notes

Mario Bruno has been elected to the board of directors of Leadership Greater Hartford.

Tisa Rabun-Marshall has been appointed to serve on the Leadership of Greater Hartford's executive committee as the board's secretary.

Michael P. Jordan has been elected as chairman of the 30-member advisory council for the Connecticut Society of Certified Public Accountants. Jordan, who is managing director at Anderson Tax in Old Greenwich, will be installed in his new position at the group's annual meeting in June.

Eric D. Daniels is chairing the 90th Anniversary Human Relations Award Banquet hosted by the National Conference for Community and Justice. Daniels, an attorney at Robinson + Cole, has led several other major fundraising events for Hartford-area non-profit organizations, including Hartford Hospital and Interval House.

Griffin Scaglia and **Danielle Brinckman,** captain of the boys and girls varsity soccer teams at Glastonbury High School, have been named All-Americans by the National Soccer Coaches Association of America.

Glenn Maynard's new book is out. "Spiritual Intervention" is the third and final installment in his paranormal romance trilogy. Maynard, a Wethersfield resident, lived in Glastonbury for many years. Learn more at glennmaynard.weebly.com.

Mila Hipsky, Cody Giaccone, Carsyn Hartung, Andrea Quintana-Jacobs, Ruby Toolan and **Madeline Zavalick** from Smith Middle School, **Kaitlyn Mitchell, Hope Garrett** and **Angela Sang** from Glastonbury High School, and **Emma Henry**, a student at Kingswood Oxford School were recognized at the 26th Annual Connecticut Scholastic Art Awards.

Events spotlight

Maple Sugar Madness

March 12, 1 to 4 p.m.
Welles-Shipman-Ward House, 972 Main Street, South Glastonbury
Hsgct.org or 860-633-6890

Courtesy photo

Guests at this annual outdoor winter event will see how maple syrup is made from the sap of maples at the property, have a chance to tour the barns and the historic house while listening to Colonial-era fife music and sample homemade syrup with pancakes made over the house's 18th century hearth using an authentic recipe. An expert from Belltown Orchards will demonstrate tree pruning at 2 p.m. Admission is $5, and the snow date is March 19.

A mastodon in our midst

March 14, 7 p.m.
Welles-Turner Memorial Library Friends Room, wtmlib.com or 860-652-7720

Photo courtesy of Brian Jones

Learn about "Old Longtooth," a mastodon discovered in 1913 by workmen digging a ditch on the Hill-Stead estate of A.A. Pope in Farmington, from CT State Archaeologist Brian Jones. Radiocarbon dating on a tusk fragment indicates that the mastodon died about 14,500 years ago. Jones, who holds a doctorate in Anthropology and is associated with the Connecticut State Museum of Natural History at the University of Connecticut, lives in Glastonbury with his wife and two children. He'll talk about the mastodon's journey and its continuing importance to understanding the state's ancient environment and history. Seating is limited, so registration, online or at the number above, is requested.

Supper at the Welles Tavern

March 25, 6 to 8 p.m.
Welles-Shipman-Ward House, 972 Main Street, South Glastonbury
HSGlastonbury@sbcglobal.net or 860-633-6890

Courtesy photo

The Historical Society of Glastonbury is offering an evening of time travel with this annual event. Guests will step into Joseph Welles's taproom in 1796. They'll be greeted by Joseph and Susannah Welles and will experience the way Americans of the time ate and socialized. Supper will be a light, authentic 18th-century meal of ham, hot slaw, cheese, homemade bread and apple pie, all made according to recipes of the time. Tom Callinan, Connecticut's first State Troubadour, will be among the travelers visiting the Welles Hotel. Admission is $40, and advance reservations are recommended through the email or phone number above.

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March calendar

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

1 Discussion of The Good Earth, by Pearl Buck, 7 to 8 p.m., Welles Turner Memorial Library, 2407 Main St. No charge, no registration necessary. 860-652-7720 or wtmlib.com

2 Foreign Language Literacies Showcase, 6 to 8 p.m., Smith Middle School, 216 Addison Road. Snow date March 10. glastonburyforeignlanguage.org.

Office hours for State Rep. Prasad Srinivasan (R-Glastonbury), 6:30 to 9 p.m., Welles-Turner Memorial Library, 2407 Main St. In case of bad weather, check RepSrinivasan.com for make-up date.

5 Author fair with area authors, 2 to 4 p.m., Friends Room, Welles Turner Memorial Library, 2407 Main St. No charge. 860-652-7720 or wtmlib.com

6 Demonstration of Kuchipudi traditional Indian dance, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., Welles Turner Memorial Library, 2407 Main St. Reservations required. 860-652-7720 or wtmlib.com

7 Town plan and zoning commission, 7 p.m., town hall council chambers, 2155 Main St. glastonbury-ct.gov.

9 Learn about free e-books, magazines and movies with RB digital, 3 p.m., Welles Turner Memorial Library, 2407 Main St. Registration required. 860-652-7720 or wtmlib.com

10 Art in the Abbey, 5 to 9 p.m., St. James' Episcopal Church, 2584 Main St. $20. stjamesglastonbury.org or ArtintheAbbey on Facebook.

12 Maple Sugar Madness, 1 to 4 p.m., Welles-Shipman-Ward House, 972 Main St. $5. 860-633-6890 or hsgct.org. Snow date March 19.

13 Board of education, 7:30 p.m., town hall council chambers, 2155 Main St. 860-652-7961 or glastonburyus.org.

14 Town council, 7 p.m., town hall council chambers, 2155 Main St. 860-652-7710 or glastonbury-ct.gov.

"An Ice Age Odyssey: The Pope Mastodon's Epic Journey Through Life, Death, Storage Crates and Museums" with CT State Archaeologist Brian Jones, 7 p.m., Friends Room, Welles Turner Memorial Library, 2407 Main St. Registration required. 860-652-7720 or wtmlib.com

15 Nutrition and menopause, 6:30 p.m., Welles Turner Memorial Library, 2407 Main St. 860-652-7720 or wtmlib.com

16 The Kerry Boys in concert, part of the Ella Waters Music Series sponsored by the Friends of the Welles-Turner Memorial Library, 6:30 p.m., Friends Room, Welles Turner Memorial Library, 2407 Main St. 860-652-7720 or wtmlib.com

19 Healthy Living Longer Fair, 2 to 4 p.m., Welles Turner Memorial Library, 2407 Main St. 860-652-7720 or wtmlib.com

21 Town plan and zoning commission, 7 p.m., town hall council chambers, 2155 Main St. glastonbury-ct.gov.

"Keep Up With Your Grandkids: Social Media 101," 3 to 4:30 p.m., Riverfront Community Center, 300 Welles Street. Reservations required. 860-652-7720 or wtmlib.com

22 Town council final budget hearing, 7 to 10 p.m., town hall council chambers, 2155 Main St. 860-652-7961 or glastonburyus.org.

23 Locker room open house, 4 to 6:30 p.m., Academy Teen Center, 2143 Main St. 860-652-7838 or teen.center@glastonbury-ct.gov.

25 Supper at the Welles Tavern with former State Troubadour Tom Callinan, 6 to 8 p.m., Welles-Shipman-Ward House, 972 Main St. $40. For reservations, contact 860-633-6890 or HSGlastonbury@sbcglobal.net.

River walk with eagles' nest sponsored by the Land Heritage Coalition, 1 p.m. Meet at the end of Tryon Street to carpool to Portland Fairgrounds. lhcglastonbury.org

27 Board of education, 7:30 p.m., town hall council chambers, 2155 Main St. 860-652-7961 or glastonburyus.org.

28 Town council, 7 p.m., town hall council chambers, 2155 Main St. 860-652-7710 or glastonbury-ct.gov.

Beginning fisherman clinic, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., Gideon Welles School, 1029 Neipsic Road. No charge. Also March 30.

Bring Your Own Craft, a new program, 6:30 p.m., Welles Turner Memorial Library, 2407 Main St. 860-652-7720 or wtmlib.com. Adults only. Group will meet monthly on the fourth Tuesday. GL

Artist Ed Hicks will talk about eight famous artists from a new perspective on March 10 as part of the Art in the Abbey celebration at St. James' Episcopal Church.

Photo by Tim Becker/Creative Images Photography

Looking beyond the easel

Artist Ed Hicks explores artists from a new perspective

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

You may know Van Gogh's "Starry Night" and be well-versed in Picasso's blue period, but do you know which artist said he wanted to be reincarnated as a diamond ring on Elizabeth Taylor's finger?

That's the type of question hat artist Ed Hicks has been delving into.

"It's to enlighten and inform with the explicit goal to entertain," said Hicks, who studied art in college before having a successful career in advertising.

A few years ago, while recovering from foot surgery, Hicks began reading about artist James McNeill Whistler.

"I knew about his basic approach to painting; I knew about 'Whistler's Mother,'" he said.

However, he began to realize there was a lot more to learn about Whistler's life.

"There were parts I never knew about, the way he went about day to day, I found it so interesting," he said. "I read the story of his life up, down, around and backward."

He put together a presentation

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about Whistler and later started exploring the lives of other artists. Recently, he has been giving presentations about little-known facts about several of them, including one scheduled for March 10 at the Art in the Abbey celebration at St. James Episcopal Church on Main Street.

"There were a couple of them made him [Whistler] look like a Sunday school teacher," Hicks said. "Dali and Warhol, wow, they were really over the top."

In his new presentation, which will run about an hour, Hicks will explore the lives of Vincent Van Gosh, Salvador Dali, Andy Warhol, Pablo Picasso, Georgia O'Keefe, Jackson Pollack, James McNeill Whistler and Henry Toulouse Lautrec. He'll start each section with a question, such as the one about Elizabeth Taylor. (The answer is Warhol, by the way.)

"I call it a conversation I want to have with the audience," Hicks said of his talk, which he calls "8 Great Artists: Their work, words and way."

The presentations include some biographical information, as well as art and quotes from each artist's life.

"I'll talk about their words and their ways," he said.

Hicks, whose own work is in homes and corporations around the country, was scheduled to debut the presentation in February for the Manchester Community College Seniors Club. He said it has a universal appeal.

"This just isn't for art groups by any means. It's for anyone who's interested in people's lives and history," he said.

While he studied these artists in school, he said he learned quite a bit doing the research for the presentation.

"I never knew anything about their lives above the easel. I found it intriguing and thought it was an interesting thing to share," he said. "Many people know about these eight artists and their work. When I found out more about their lives, it gives a greater understanding of the work. Once I knew about their words and their ways, it brought a deeper meaning."

Hicks, a native of Holyoke, Mass. who studied at the Vesper George School of Art in Boston, came to Glastonbury to work for his cousin's advertising agency and went on to work for other ad agencies in the area. He was inspired after attending an art show in Niantic and began to develop his work in the fine arts, combining weekday work in advertising with participating in art shows on weekends. He's known for his paintings of familiar themes with settings such as Maine and Nantucket and other spots in New England.

He's a past president of the Glastonbury Art Guild, an artist member of The Salmagundi Club in New York City, and a former board member of the Connecticut Watercolor Society and has had several one-man shows, including at The Art Gallery at the Mill House in Chester, at Picture This in Westport, at the Glastonbury Art Guild and at Images in Briarcliffe Manor, New York.

Sandy Ouellette, chairman of Art in the Abbey, is excited about Hicks's new presentation.

"Ed is one of my favorite people. He is so easy to talk to and has such interesting perspectives on things. I guess it's his creative mind," she said. "He is very easygoing and just likes to have fun doing what he does best. Ed's lectures aren't typical intimidating lectures. They are just a fascinating creative conversation with a really cool guy that just happens to be a world-class artist. Ed is also a planner and takes a lot of time to prepare for his programs which helps everything go smoothly." GL

The Fifth Annual Art in the Abbey celebration will take place March 10 from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m., at St. James' Episcopal Church, 2584 Main Street. For more information and tickets, visit stjamesglastonbury.org. To learn more about Hicks and his art, visit ejhicksart.com.

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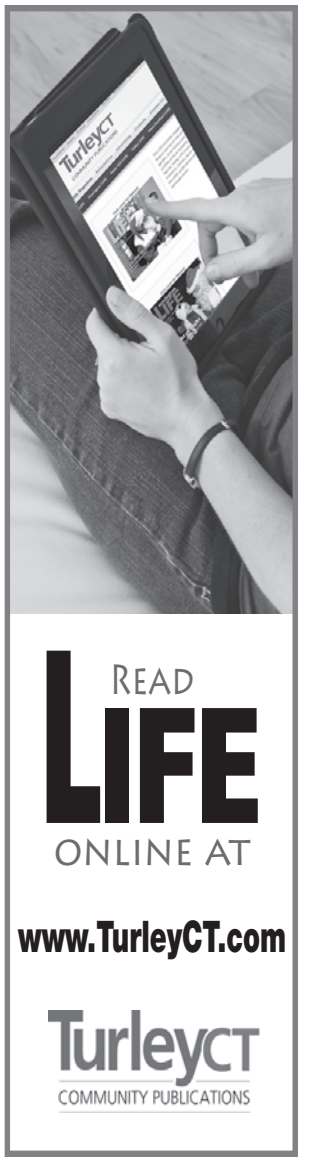

LIFE of E's

Senior pets add spice

My husband and I moved to Cromwell in September 2014, bringing with us the last member of our cat family. We sent our boy, Luke, to the Rainbow Bridge that January and spent the next year without a pet in our household.

My first four cats were females, adopted in pairs from local shelters, first in New Jersey and then in Rhode Island. Luke belonged to a neighbor before he adopted us; he was about 7 at the time. Your brain can make all the logical arguments it wants about keeping retirement life simple, but when you've had at least one cat in your home for almost 40 years, your heart has a mind of its own.

About a year ago, I began to consider adoption, but I didn't want to start over with kittens that might be left without a home if they outlived me. I spent many hours on the Internet looking at cats whose aging owners had either died or been forced to give them up. More often than not, these felines are seniors themselves, making them difficult to place. Visit a local shelter any Saturday morning and you'll see clusters of families fawning over the kittens. The cats that are "long in the tooth" are often ignored.

Since I wanted two cats again, I chose an organization that had several seniors awaiting placement. It's the Protectors of Animals in East Hartford.

In January of this year, POA opened an affordable spay/neuter clinic. Their goal is to dramatically reduce the number of unwanted litters in the Greater Hartford area. I support that effort not just for the obvious reasons. When you stem the flow of kittens upstream, more families will consider adopting older pets downstream. It's like trickle-down economics in the animal world.

We adopted 10-year-old Kallie through POA in March 2016. She's a calico and tortoise combination, quiet and gentle. Her former owner is now in a nursing home. In fairly short time, she began sleeping with me, much as Luke did in his last years. When I'm stretched out trying to work, she tries to perch on my chest in front of my laptop. Kallie may be quiet, but she does not like to be ignored.

In April we added 7-year-old Stella—not quite a senior, but getting on in years. She's a torbie—a tiger and calico combination. Her original owner is likewise in a nursing home now. Stella is a talker and she's as energetic as Kallie is calm.

Stella has turned out to be quite a character. I was told to avoid giving her catnip because it gets her "over-stimulated."

It wasn't the catnip; it's just Stella.

During the day she naps a lot. She's tried just about every piece of furniture and I don't think there's any that she doesn't like if the sun is right.

Soon after we brought Stella home, we discovered that she enjoys "hunting" throughout the night. She goes to the end of the loft area where my bear collection is displayed in wooden crates. One by one she selects her prey and carries it in her mouth down the stairs from the loft. All the while, she emits her strange hunting meow. She deposits each animal, usually at the foot of the stairs. Then, she goes back up to stalk another one.

I've taken to sleeping with earplugs, since the hunting noises are surprisingly loud and seem to go on for hours. In the morning, I pick up the bodies and put them back in their display. It's not all bad: I get good exercise from the two or three trips that it takes to bring them back to the loft.

In an effort to preserve my own collection, I bought Stella several small stuffed animals—without catnip in them.

She now has over a dozen critters. In addition to the predictable mice and rabbits, there's a cheetah, a duck, two sheep, a skunk, two bears of her own and a turquoise fish with spongy spines. I had hoped she'd leave my bears alone. Fat chance. One morning there were fourteen stuffies scattered about. Six of them were Stella's; the rest were mine. I've actually had to mend the limbs on several of her prey. You read this correctly. I'm spending my retirement stitching up the bodies that she dismembers.

Stella has taught her sister how to hunt. A reminder that Kallie was the quiet one—virtually silent. Now when I hear a hunting meow in the early evening, it's just as likely to be Kallie carrying around one of their animal print mice.

The two of them are so adorable, it's impossible to be upset with any of this. If my bears are still fair game, so what? The pleasure that these senior cats are bringing to their senior parents is worth every slobbered up stuffie that we step on barefoot in the morning. GL

Elaine M. Decker's books—Retirement Sparks Redux, Retirement Sparks Again, Retirement Sparks and CANCER: A Coping Guide—are on Amazon.com, including Kindle editions. One of her essays appears in the anthology: 70 Things To Do When You Turn 70. Contact her at: emdecker@ix.netcom.com.

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Photos by Mara Dresner

Artist Monica Neish makes Christmas ornaments in a variety of designs using classic German Springerle molds.

Monica Neish makes Christmas ornaments using Springerle molds, originally used for cookies.

Putting a modern twist on antique designs

Monica Neish makes ornaments from traditional molds

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

While it might seem surprising that Monica Neish pursued a career in finance, it makes perfect sense that she didn't stay in the field.

"I'm an accountant by schooling. I found it unfulfilling. It wasn't me," said Neish, who worked in internal accounting. "I stepped out of it when had children. That's when I got into making stuff."

Neish has always had a creative flair.

"Even as a little girl, I would do flower arrangement for gatherings. I always enjoyed working with my hands," she said.

She had earned her college degree in English, thinking she might go into a more creative field.

"I was looking through the newspapers and all the jobs were in finance and accounting. I was looking for a good job," she said.

She spent about a decade in the field.

"I found out it was not really what I was looking for," she said of accounting.

Neish has found plenty of outlets for her creative side, including making dried floral arrangements that she started selling at craft fairs when her children were young. She would do baskets, wreaths, shadow boxes and other designs, although there were a number of challenges.

"We had an entire room of our house that had flowers hanging from the ceiling, drying. People with allergies who came to the house didn't appreciate it. It was messy work," she recalled. "They were really difficult to transport. Everything would break when you'd try to transport them, when you'd box them up." Eventually the dried flower arrangements became less popular and Neish turned more to live flowers, working in her own gardens and at a number of florists, including Glastonbury Flower Shop, Cinnamon Bay Florist and Keser's Flowers.

"I loved it; I just loved having my hands in live flowers, the arranging part of it. I love blooming things. It was

also a nice way to artistically express myself in the flowers," she said.

While she still enjoys doing flowers for parties, she also expanded into other areas. She did terrariums for a time, but ran into issues similar to those she encountered when doing the dried flower arrangements.

"That was great fun," she said. But challenges included transportation, dealing with gnats, storage and New England weather. "You can't do it in cold weather. You could never sell them at Christmas time. It was fun but it was just not sustainable."

She also took classes at Manchester Community College and learned to do wood carving.

"For my honeymoon we traveled to Switzerland and we saw a lot of wood carvings, a lot of faces carved into pieces of wood. I thought that was fascinating and wanted to know how to do that. There used to be dead tree in our yard and I carved a face into that. Our yard got to be a little eerie," she said with a laugh.

While she was proficient with the craft, it was time consuming.

"It was slow going. It was not something I could have done for a business. It takes a long time to make a piece," she said. "I gave away a lot of walking sticks. You still see them around town."

Neish, who's of German descent, began collecting Springerle molds, which she first found in antique shops in New Hampshire.

"They were all carved by people who do chip carving. They were made for Christmas cookies, for anise or licorice flavored cookies," she said. "I began decorating a dining room wall [with them]. My husband said, 'That's nice. What are you going to do with them?'"

Neish originally thought she'd use the molds to make the traditional cookies.

"I tried the cookies with the old original recipe using ammonia. They were very difficult to make and everybody hated them. After all the work, the kids said, 'No, we want Chips Ahoy,' so we decided not to go into the cookie business," she said.

So she began thinking of other ways to use the decorative molds.

"First, I tried a salt dough. The bugs got to them very quickly so we decided that was not a good idea. I stored the dough for one winter and the next time I pulled them out, it was all eaten. Salt dough also doesn't take the color so I couldn't paint them," she noted. "Then, I said I'll try clay, polymer clay. It's readily available at any craft store. It made a crisp, well-defined print. It lasts forever. It cures in a kitchen oven; you don't a need kiln to do it."

This time, her idea was a success, and she's been making and selling the clay ornaments for about a

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decade. While her work is available online through Etsy, she sells the majority of the ornaments at crafts fairs between September and December, including at the annual fair that will take place at 2 Hopewell December 5.

"I've tried selling at other times in the year. Nobody wants to see Christmas ornaments mid-summer," Neish said.

She estimates she sells about 500 ornaments each year. Christmas themes, such as Santas and Christmas trees, are always big sellers. A dragon design has become a hit due to the popularity of "Game of Thrones."

"The original molds were mostly commissioned by German bakeries, so there's a historical significance to them," she said. "They were given for holidays or weddings or funerals. They were kind of used like we'd give a Hallmark card today; they'd give a batch of cookies."

Some of her molds are antiques, while others are reproductions she's had made in order to preserve the original mold. Still other molds are her own designs, adapted from classic designs.

"The originals are quite valuable. You don't want to be sticking clay into them," she said. "The originals can cost hundreds of dollars. You have to be a little careful with them."

She usually makes the ornaments in shifts and finishes them using gold leaf, which she admits is "a tedious process."

"But if I don't use the gold, they just don't look that great. It just looks rich with real gold on it," she said.

The ornaments sell for between $10.50 and $19.50.

"I have about 12 of her Springerles and have given many others as gifts, Glastonbury resident Laura Rudolph said. "Our pets are now immortalized in Springerle ornaments – our black lab, our bunny, my son's male tabby and my daughter's sweet orange kitty. I love that years from now, our kids will be putting these ornaments on their tree and remembering their pets. I have two favorites, one of a Swiss farmhouse with flowers overflowing from window boxes. It reminds me of the many times I have vacationed in Switzerland at exactly that kind of farmhouse. The other favorite is extremely special. It is of our sailboat painted the same colors and with the name in very tiny letters on the stern. How she painted that name is beyond me! I love the Springerles because of the detail in them. I love that you can easily find one that matches your interests."

She also especially likes an acorn ornament that she's had for years and a rainbow fish one that she noted is popular with kids.

"I have put a small cluster of them together on a wall for a display. Why wait for Christmas?" she said.

Neish has made ornaments as favors for showers, and has molds

Because antique molds are expensive, artist Monica Neish often has reproductions made to use for her Christmas ornaments, such as this skier.

with a bride and groom for a wedding shower and with a rocking horse for a baby shower.

Helene Kapelewski called upon her when a friend was having a baby shower and was impressed with the painted rocking horse ornaments.

"She put them in beautiful shimmery drawstring bags and they were at each person's place. It was such a beautiful keepsake," said Kapelewski, a Glastonbury resident who has also has had Neish do flower arrangements as well. "She's extremely creative and artistic. Whatever she touches is beautiful."

Neish continues to spread her artistic wings, having just learned how to work with stained glass.

"I have new stained glass ideas coming," she said. "I'm working on stained glass wind chimes. That's my next big endeavor."

She has no plans to give up the ornaments.

"It's meditative, it makes me peaceful. There are people who say it would drive me crazy working with tiny pieces. I love it; the focusing is wonderful. Of course, my vision has been going over the years," she said.

Many of the designs date back to the late 1800s and she likes that sense of connection.

"There are stories behind each ornament. They each have individual historical significance besides that they're beautiful ornaments," she said. "They all have a story or a reason." **GL**

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Business Notes

Barry Horowitz of **Nirenstein, Horowitz & Associates** will present a free series of estate planning seminars March 28, 28, and 30 and April 1 at the company's new office at 200 Glastonbury Boulevard, Suite 202.

Chrissy Monaco has been named co-owner of **Monaco Ford**. She is the first female owner in the company's 95 years of operation.

Glastonbury-based **United Financial Bancorp** reported net income of $14.6 million for the quarter ending December 31, 2016. The company's net income for the last quarter of 2015 was $9.9 million.

Close to Home, 277 Hebron Avenue, is sponsoring a sewing session for volunteers interested in making skirts and shorts for kids as part of the AngelRide fundraiser for seriously ill children. The classroom will be open March 17 from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. for sewers. Kits and machines will be supplied, and a leader will be available who needs help with the project. To register, call 860-633- 0721.

The New England Center for Cognitive Behavioral Therapy has hired Jillian Bascetta to their staff of clinicians. She specializes in preventative care for mental health, stress management, anger management and issues facing victims of trauma. She has a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Connecticut and a master's degree in in health psychology from CCSU.

Local students can to apply for the Robert T. Kenney Scholarship through the **American Savings Foundation**. High School seniors in the top one-third of their class or with a grade point average of at least 2.5, college students with a grade point average of at least 2.5 and non-traditional adult students who will be enrolled in college for the 2017-2018 academic year are eligible to apply. Applications can be submitted online at asfdn.org or visit the website or call 860-827-2556.

Stephanie Tishler has opened a coaching business in town, **Tishler Coaching Services.** She has a certification in professional coaching from the Institute of Professional Excellence in Coaching. To learn more, visit tishlercoachingservices.com.

Pet Wants is helping area animal rescue services by asking customers to buy an additional pound when ordering food for their own pets. The store will match that extra pound with their own donation. The store, which carries fresh, small-batch pet food, is at 2249 New London Turnpike. To learn more, visit petwantsglastonbury.com.

Chrissy Monaco

Bryan Feery

Stephanie Tishler

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Bryan Feery was the top listing agent for January and Tracy Malloy was the top selling agent at **Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices New England Properties'** local office. GL

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An empowering experience

New indoor cycling studio offers physical and emotional benefits

by Nancy Thompson
Editor

Jocelyn DeMaio wants to empower you.

As the owner of the new Empowered Indoor Cycling Studio on New London Turnpike, she refers to herself as the company's "chief empowered officer" because empowerment – emotional as well as physical – is her passion.

DeMaio, who has been teaching cycling in town for the past several years, had wanted to open her own studio for at least a decade and decided recently that the time had come. "It was one of those 'now or never' situations," she said. She opened the studio in December with Neil Parisi. Parisi, who has had three back surgeries, started cycling on the advice of his chiropractor and owns the business with DeMaio.

"This is my passion, helping people meet their goals while having fun," she said. "And it's such a great workout, low-impact and high-intensity."

DeMaio grew up in Chaplin, a small town in the state's northeast corner, and went to elementary school in Willimantic. She was an avid athlete as a child and has stayed active as an adult. She participated in several sports in high school and graduated in 2002 from UConn with a major in sociology and a minor in women's studies. While there, she was one of two women who played intramural basketball with men. She has a master's degree in organizational management from Eastern Connecticut State University and was recognized as one of "40 under 40" by the Hartford Business Journal in 2015.

"I had the immense feeling that I came into this world to help people," she said, adding that she has always been interested in women's health and helping people emotionally and physically.

She had a hard time finding a job in social services job after college and ended up working in technical support and customer service for a large insurance company where she still works while pursuing her other interests on the side. She's an active volunteer and leader for the United Way's Women's Leadership Council and is co-chair the council's 2017 Power of the Purse luncheon, which is expected to exceed the $330,000 raised last year to help Hartford women and families improve their financial skills and achieve financial stability.

At Empowered, DeMaio and eight other instructors lead classes starting at 5:30 a.m. and running through the early evening. Most last 50 minutes, but the "Sweaty 75" Thursdays at 4:40 runs for 75 minutes.

Unlike Zumba, step aerobics and some other workouts, DeMaio said indoor cycling attracts men and

"Her energy is contagious, as she is always smiling and cheering her riders on, while she's teaching."
– Sloane Williams

Jocelyn DeMaio is the "chief empowered officer" at her new indoor cycling studio.

Allegra Anderson photo

women fairly equally. "We see more men than other forms of group exercise," she said. "This is hard-core and they're working hard."

She likes working with a group because of the positive atmosphere and the way everyone roots for each other. She said she named the business "empowered" because to her it signifies resilience, the ability to turn things around, to take ownership and to put in whatever work is required. She also relates it to power, which her top-of-the-line cycles measure.

DeMaio's studio and programs appeal to a variety of clients.

Jennifer Sanford met DeMaio three years ago when she needed to increase her cardio workouts after a knee injury.

She said she appreciated her energy and positive outlook and the way she motivates her students. "It truly is state-of-the-art workout and takes my workouts to a whole level higher," she said. "It's an intense effective 50 minutes that is a game changer for my day or my mood."

Rob Garrey has known DeMaio as a fitness instructor for about four years. He praised her for her energy, enthusiasm and skills as a motivator and for her passion about her business and her clients.

Sloane Williams has been a student in DeMaio's cycling classes for nine years.

"Jocelyn is a very motivating and encouraging instructor, Williams said. "Her energy is contagious, as she is always smiling and cheering her riders on, while she's teaching. She does everything in her power to make her clients comfortable and welcome. She is so creative and finds ways to motivate her riders by having theme rides like 80's, Superbowl and charity rides. Jocelyn is passionate about her riders and their progress. She willingly takes suggestions to make her instruction better."

She said she enjoys the motivating instructors and the personalized technology that track statistics such as miles per hour, watts, calories burned and energy. She also enjoys the cycling room with its varied mood lighting and clear sound system, as well as being able to sign up ahead of time for a specific bike.

She urged prospective riders to give it a try.

"A new exercise experience can be scary, but Jocelyn and her instructors make it fun and inviting," she said. **GL**

Empowered Indoor Cycling Studio is at 345 New London Turnpike, Suite 1A, at the rear of the One Stop Plaza. To learn more and for a current schedule, visit empoweredstudio.com or call 860-430-2170.

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MANCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE

March Events

Campus Visits. SSC Atrium. Regional college and university representatives will discuss transfer opportunities with interested students. Info: Robert C. Turner, Jr. at 860-512-3328 or email rturner@manchestercc.edu.

Bay Path University. 3/1 and 3/20, 10 a.m.
University of St. Joseph. 3/22, 10 a.m.
Central Connecticut State University. 3/23, 10 a.m.

Transfer Fair. 3/2, 10 a.m., SBM Charitable Foundation Building Galleria 1st Floor. Ready to transfer your credits? Students will have the opportunity to meet with representatives from more than 50 different colleges and universities, who will answer questions regarding admission requirements, transfer scholarships and other educational opportunities. Info: Robert C. Turner, Jr. at 860-512-3328 or email rturner@manchestercc.edu.

The Common Read Book Discussion. 3/2, 12 p.m. and 3/29, 3:30 p.m., LRC A121. Join us for a discussion of MCC's Common Read, Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God.* Refreshments provided. Info: Andrew Sottile at 860-512-2668 or email asottile@manchestercc.edu.

***Girl Rising* Film Screening and Discussion.** 3/8, 11 a.m., SBMCF Auditorium. Please join us in celebrating International Women's Day! *Girl Rising* uses storytelling to inspire action that gets girls into classrooms worldwide. Get to know nine unforgettable girls and the tremendous challenges they face in order to pursue their dreams. After the film, join us for a discussion on the global and local impact of the education gender gap, and how you can make a difference. Info: Nia Mitchell at 860-512-2647 or email nmitchell@manchestercc.edu.

Step Dances Performance. 3/20, 6 p.m., SBMCF Auditorium. Dances will include the lively treble reel and the elegant slip jib, choreographed by the Coogan School, and other dances choreographed many decades ago in Ireland. Coogan students will also perform the four-hand reel, a figure dance that lives on as a beautiful, intricate and difficult dance requiring the use of arm movements as well as step work. Info: Sheila Springsteen at 860-627-0444 or emailsspringsteen@aol.com.

Joint Forum on Inequality: An Interdisciplinary Exploration of the Issue of Inequality. 3/30, 12:30 p.m., SBMCF Auditorium. Students, faculty and staff will present and explore the issue of inequality from a number of disciplines in order to better understand the impact of a growing socio-economic divide in the U.S. and to learn about civic engagement. Info: Maura O'Connor at 860-512-2692 or email moconnor@manchestercc.edu.

29th Annual Regional Job Fair. 3/31, 9 a.m., Great Path Academy Gym. Job seekers can meet face-to-face with 60+ employers. Career opportunities are available in all areas from management, professional, technical, medical and sales, to manufacturing and everything in between. Info: Julie Greene at 860-512-3372 or email jgreene@manchestercc.edu.

National Issues Forum Deliberative Dialogue: Food Insecurity. 3/31, 12:30 p.m., Great Path Academy Gym. The USDA defines food insecurity as a state in which "consistent access to adequate food is limited by a lack of money and other resources at times during the year." According to a recent study, 13.1 percent, or 472,540 Connecticut residents, are food insecure. Following the NIF's process, small groups will exchange and weigh ideas and opinions about the issue with a goal of understanding its complexities and developing an informed opinion. Info: Brion van Over at 860-512-2645 or email bvanover@manchestercc.edu.

All events are free and open to the public, unless otherwise noted, and are subject to change without notice. For current information or notices of cancellation, click on "View All Events" on MCC's web site: www.manchestercc.edu.

03/2017

a new leash on LIFE

Our friends at Sabita's Rescue are hoping to find forever homes for three male tiger kittens recently rescued from an overcrowded home. They're six months old, and despite having a rough start in life are in good health and have wonderful dispositions. They're quite bonded to one another but could be adopted individually. They'd be great company for someone who has a warm lap, a sunny window or simply a peaceful home. Contact Diane at Sabita's Rescue, 860-416-3614 or Sabitasrescue@aol.com.

Churro is a tiny 2-month-old Chihuahua mix. He's a feisty little puppy who needs to be housebroken and also needs training, exercise and socialization. Mandatory obedience and socialization training are part of his adoption plan. He has already been neutered.
Inquiries about adoption may be made at the Connecticut Humane Society, 701 Russell Road, Newington. Call 860-594-4500. More information, including videos, can be found online at cthumane.org. Click on "Adopt" and "Newington." The Connecticut Humane Society is a private organization and has no time limits for adoption.

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LIFE MAGAZINE

Slice of LIFE

photos by Lisa Brisson

Members and friends of the CT River Valley Chamber of Commerce gathered at the chamber's annual dinner meeting to celebrate the chamber's work and honor several award winners.

Chamber annual dinner meeting

1. Doreen and Paul Haas enjoy a chat with Laurie Trombly. **2.** l-r: Pam Crouch, Lynn Damon and Annette Larabee enjoy the evening's festivities. **3.** l-r: Ginger Lynn shares stories with Ed and Laura Quinn. **4.** l-r: Mike Romanski, Mary Ellen Dombrowski and Joe Jaconetta stop to pose for a photo. **5.** Margaret Wilcox, winner of this year's Glastonbury Business Person of the Year, speaks after receiving the award. **6.** The Wilcox family records the special moment as Margaret speaks. **7.** Annette Larabee and Donna Finocchiaro present Paul Hass with the chamber's Ambassador of the Year award. **8.** Neil Parisi and Jocelyn, owners of Empowered Indoor Cycling Studio, enjoy the evening's festivities. **9.** l-r: Kelly Bierbaum, McKenzy Wright and Ann Zajchowski enjoy the gathering. **10.** State Sen. Steve Cassano and State Rep. Prasad Srinivasan present Margaret Wilcox with a citation from the Connecticut General Assembly. **11.** Glastonbury LIFE sales representative Matt Winkler accepts The Jim Bougie Leadership award from Annette Larabee and Joe Bierbaum.

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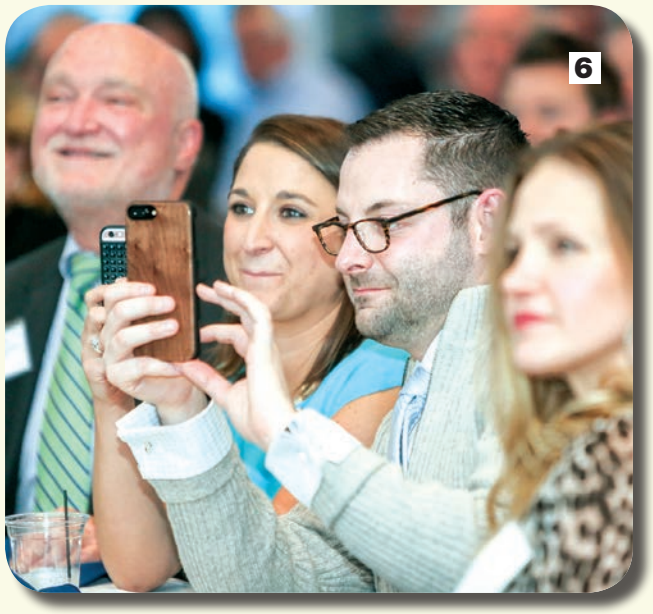
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Jocelyn DeMaio
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State of Connecticut
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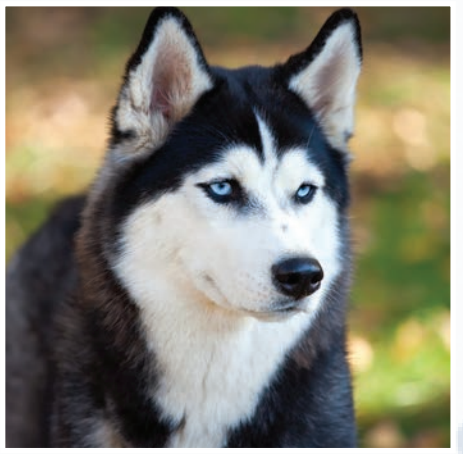
PETS



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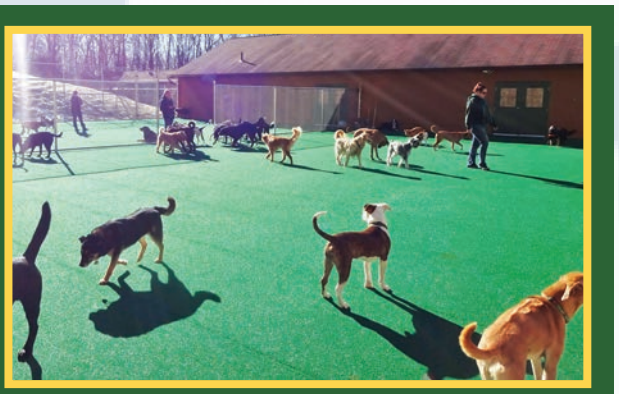

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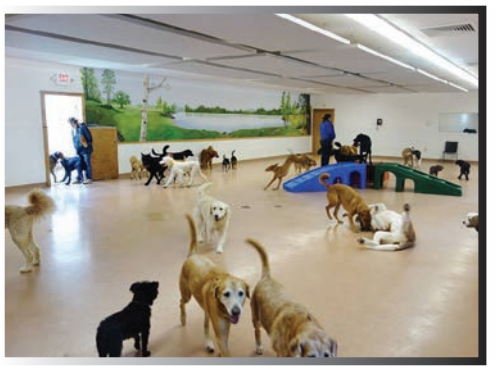

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Get Cozy

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Get *Cozy*

A cozy home

Design tips that bring comfort on chilly days

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

Chuckles, Connecticut's answer to Punxsutawney Phil, may be predicting an early spring, but that doesn't mean there aren't still plenty of chilly days and even colder nights ahead. Since home is not only where the heart is, but also where most of us hunker down when the calendar turns from merry and bright to dreary and dank, we asked design experts for their best tips, big and small, to make your favorite rooms cozier.

Use the walls

Liz Goldberg of Goldberg Design LLC in Glastonbury said that comfort is all around you.

"One thing that I think makes a family or living room cozier is upholstered walls. I've used them in many areas. It not only looks amazing with all of the beautiful fabrics available, but, functionally, it helps with noise reverberation and you know how cozy a room feels when you can sit and have a nice conversation or hear the music playing softly," she said. "When you're in a room and you can sit next to someone and have a nice quiet conversation, that makes it feel more intimate, and cozy to me is intimate."

Goldberg said there are numerous techniques and fabrics to choose, including cotton, vinyl and leather looks. In addition to changing the feel of a room, it can serve a practical purpose as well.

"It's a great method if you bought an older home or a condo and there's old-fashioned paneling. You put this over the wall and it hides a multitude of sins," she said.

It is a job that's best left to the professionals.

"You have to know what you're doing or it can get messy looking," Goldberg noted.

She said that some clients pick one wall to feature, while others decide to use fabric on all their walls.

"It's a similar feeling as when there's a bare window and then you put a drape on the window. It softens the effect and gives you an opportunity to introduce color and texture in the room on another surface you might not have thought of. It can really transform a space," she said.

Accent with a personal touch

Heather Grahling, owner of Vivid Hue Home, a gift and home decor boutique in Farmington, believes that adding accents that are meaningful to you will help make any room feel warm and welcoming.

"A side table suddenly becomes more alluring with a special vase filled with blooms. Place treasures found during family travels on top of a coffee table and add layers with stacks of personal interest books. These personal accessories not only provide a cozy touch, they will add layers to your room that will ultimately result in a homier feel,"

Get *Cozy*

Grahling said.

She puts this into practice in her own home.

"One of my favorite coffee table accents is a brass lobster that I found while thrifting on vacation in Kennebunkport. I bought the lobster for a steal and set it on top of design books on my coffee table. It reminds me of my summer at the beach and also adds a nice conversation piece when guests ask about it," she said.

She also uses photos to add a special feel.

"I love art of any kind. I have a small collection of pieces from gallery artists that I started curating a few years ago. But my ultimate favorite thing to do is to take my children's artwork and frame it and display it proudly on our walls. I display their artwork right alongside the gallery pieces," she said. "I love this eclectic mix and, even more importantly, each piece means something to me."

Appeal to all the senses

Julie Levine of West Hartford and Glastonbury's Kim Lamagna, partners in Luxury Living for Less, believes in appealing to multiple senses.

"Color, texture, sound and even taste can add to a room's coziness and ambiance," Levine explained.

She said you might want to create a reading nook within another room in your home, such as a den.

"Start with just a small corner of the room. If you're lucky to have a fireplace, you're halfway there. If not, group together some wonderful candles to cast that warm glow," she said. "Start with a soft wool rug of earthy tones, add one or two comfy chairs with a chenille fabric. Add a soft fuzzy or faux fur throw and pillow, and an ottoman to put your feet up. Place a small table nearby with great books. Add a table or floor lamp that you can dim. Pour yourself a warm beverage to soothe your soul, and you've got an instant cozy space to relax and enjoy."

Comfort a child

It's not just grown-ups who crave a cozy environment. Michele Cottone Kriticos of MCK Interiors, LLC in Wethersfield, said that a faux fireplace can add a comforting dimension to a child's room.

"There are new ones on the market that are so real both in appearance and functionality. They give the ambiance of crackling wood and the warmth of their embers," she noted. "Placing a faux fireplace in their room will not only give them a soft glow of light, but a rhythmic soothing sound of crackling wood to fall asleep to."

During the day, it may even spark your child's imagination, providing relaxing play options.

"By day they can set up a fireside tea party," she suggested. **GL**

"Start with a soft wool rug of earthy tones, add one or two comfy chairs with a chenille fabric. Add a soft fuzzy or faux fur throw and pillow, and an ottoman to put your feet up. Place a small table nearby with great books. Add a table or floor lamp that you can dim. Pour yourself a warm beverage to soothe your soul, and you've got an instant cozy space to relax and enjoy."

–Julie Levine

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Get *Cozy*

Netflix and *knit*

Chunky sweaters are chic this season along with other cozy crafts

by Sloan Brewster
Staff Writer

Knitting a chunky sweater is a great way to while away the hours in the winter and it's also very fashionable.

According to Marion Carling, owner of Village Wool in Glastonbury, super bulky yarn, which is knit using giant needles, is in this year.

It's great "if you're a millennial and want to look chic," she said.

"You can make a chunky sweater in a couple hours in front of Netflix."

Carling has knit a scarf out of bulky yarn, but during the blizzard on Thursday, February 9, she was organizing her craft room and getting ready to make hats using thinner yarn.

Knitting hats is just one of the many crafts that are perfect ways to keep warm and cozy when it's cold and snowy. The finished product is also useful for the season.

Taking on a hat is about a five-hour project, though most people tend to knit for an hour or so at a time, Carling said.

"It is a quick project. Sweaters and shawls take longer," Carling said. "Uses up a small amount of yarn."

Carling also crochets, which she said, is quicker than knitting.

"If you want something really, really warm, crocheting is good for that," she said.

Crocheting is done using double stitches, which makes the end result thicker and warmer, making it great for blankets and throws, though, it's not exclusively for the thick and warm creations.

"The opposite can be true, too," Carling said. 'You can make things very racy, open for summer."

Another perk to knitting and crocheting is that they are portable, meaning you can take them with you, have them on hand to pass the time in a variety of places and situations from a game to a mechanic's shop.

Ann Wincze of Blumen Laden in Canton takes knitting to a different level. After she makes mittens and hats, she felts them.

She intentionally makes them oversized, then puts them in the

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washing machine in hot water to felt them.

"When you agitate the wool it shrinks," Wincze said. "The wool becomes really, really dense. It's much warmer than a knitted mitten."

Making felted mittens is a craft that is well-known to fishermen's wives, Wincze said. In addition, to being warmer, because they are so dense and thick, they are also waterproof.

Wincze also knits scarves, but she doesn't felt them because it's not necessary, she said.

She makes wreaths, too, but that's a craft for other times of the year, she said.

"The wreaths you do in the spring or the summer and the fall and Christmas," she said.

Marilyn Gattinella, co-owner of Close to Home in Glastonbury, likes to quilt. This winter she has been giving a class on making appliqué blocks.

Appliqué is a French term for applying shapes to a background, such as a square piece of fabric, Gattinella said. It could be a cutout of a home or pet, or in the case of the quilts she and her students have been making in class, flowers.

"The sections of the quilt are squares with flowers on them," she said.

Gattinella quilts on a sewing machine, which makes it easy to socialize while doing her craft because the sewing machine can be set up in the family room or by the fireplace, she said.

"Conceivably, you could be sitting at your sewing machine and visiting with your family," Gattinella said.

She was planning to catch up on stitching during the snowstorm.

"I can't wait to be sitting down at my sewing machine and do my stitching," she said.

Quilting is more than a way to pass a few hours, it's about making something from the imagination.

"First of all, it's an example of creating. There are so many different avenues that a quilter could travel down that there's something for everybody, an extension of your personality, a way to share with others," Gattinella said. "Quilters are very famous for sharing."

Quilting can be used for making things such as pillows, table runners and purses.

It's also great to do in the winter.

"The whole winter thing is that we're indoors in our industry, we're not competing with the garden or the boat or the beach home," Gattinella said.

It's also a great thing to do when all the hard work is finished.

"Your family obligations are taken care of and now the me time comes," Gattinella said.

In March, Close to Home will host a sew-a-thon skirt making day for the Whole in the Wall Gang Camp. The skirts will be made out of pieces of T-shirts.

The proceeds will go to the camp.

Not all crafts are for doing at home. At The Claypen, West Hartford, you can paint your own pottery

The inventory changes seasonally, with incense holders and wax warmers and such on the shelves in winter, said Manager Stephanie Yearsley. What's more, it's a great place to thaw out after being out in the cold.

"Our kiln always keeps it warm in here," Yearsley said. "It's always cozy in here."

Painting pottery can be for the family and children, or for a girls night out. There is something on the shelves for everyone and feel free to bring a snack or a bottle of wine to enjoy.

"We have a ton of choices of pottery to choose from: useful to fun, funny stuff," Yearsley said. "You can make yourself a set of dishes or mugs."

Staff is on hand to assist and to offer suggestions or inspiration, or to help with the technical aspects, such as tracing designs, making geometric shapes or painting over lace, Yearsley said.

"It makes a cool design. We have a bucket of lace," she said. "People are always pleased with what they create. We have a saying our kilns are magical."

Staff will also help set things up for children, and there is a special child-friendly palette that has colors that don't turn brown when mixed together.

"We all know that kids will blend it all up," Yearsley said.

Yearsley enjoys when children come back to get their fired masterpiece, she said.

The Claypen also offers glass fusing.

"That's a fun way to spend an hour or two," she said.

The craft involves cutting glass into shapes and having it fired in the kiln. It can be made into anything from a dish to a business card holder.

"There's all different colors and shapes and sizes," Yearsley said. "It goes through the kiln twice. The second time it's over the mold."

Sandy Clifford of Scene Art Bar in Unionville recommends a night of sip & paint.

The bar offers instructor-led painting projects with step-by-step instructions so that even beginners leave with a completed painting.

There's also pick-your-own-painting night, a new offering that gives customers the chance to choose any painting from the bar's library, she said.

The artist is still there to help, but the project is more self-directed.

For an at-home project, Scene Art also offers s DIY paint by numbers kit. The kit, which customers order and then receive in the mail, includes a photo that's been transferred to a canvas with numbers for easy painting, paints, easel and brushes.

There is also beading and making jewelry, scrapbooking, painting on canvas and many other creative ventures. GL

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Get *Cozy*

Snuggle up

'Tis the season for warm beverages and tasty treats

by Alicia B. Smith
Associate Editor

It's snowing, it's raining and you do not have be anywhere. It is the perfect time to grab your favorite blanket, settle into your favorite chair with your book and just enjoy the afternoon. The only thing missing is a warm cup of something and a tasty bite to nibble on.

For some that might mean a cup of tea with a sweet treat, some cookies or a piece of cake, perhaps?

When it comes to tea, there are more options available than one might think that range from the savory to the sweet.

At Culteavo in Farmington, owner Viviana Pinhasi is passionate about tea and often holds tea pairings that share what to serve with tea.

"Tea with food may be a similar concept that you do when you pair wine with food, " she said. Like wine, a food can complement the tea and enhance certain aspects of the tea or food.

White tea, for example, has a delicate flavor and is best served with something light or served on its own. Fruit is a good option; apples can balance the flavor, while something like berries intensify the flavor of the tea.

White tea is not processed; rather the leaves are harvested and left to dry. Preparing white tea is simple. Loose leaf tea is put in an infuser; it is best to use 175-degree water and allow the tea to steep for 3 minutes.

Green tea, Pinhasi said, has a stronger, more vegetablelike flavor and tends to be on the salty side. Green tea, she said, goes well with Chinese or Japanese food, or fish dishes. She recommended not having it with Indian food, which is too spicy and would not match well with the spinachlike qualities of the green tea.

White chocolate with matcha, a Chinese spice, goes well with green tea, too.

Because of the green tea's unique flavor, Pinhasi suggests only steeping it for one minute.

An oolong tea is something between a green and black tea and tends to have more caffeine than the green variety.

"It will remind you of a traditional black tea, slightly spicy, more robust," Pinhasi said.

A good pairing with oolong is cheese. A good brie, which is a creamy cheese, will help to bring out the sweetness of the oolong. Parmesan is also a good choice, as that will bring out the spiciness of the tea.

Oolong, Pinhasi said, is best steeped with 185-degree water and steeped for two minutes.

Finally, there is the black tea. This variety is fairly common and usually comes from India. It tends to have a strong flavor and can be made with boiling water and steeped for as long as five minutes.

For those who have a sweet tooth, black tea is a great option to enjoy with scones or shortbread.

Pinhasi likes to enjoy a plain scone with some hibiscus-infused butter.

She also offers an interesting option at her tea shop: honey infused with smoked tea.

All teas come from the same plant, the variations from white to black and everything in between is created through the different ways of processing the leaves. Leaves are simply dried for white tea, leaves are harvested then dehydrated to make green tea. To make oolong tea, the leaves are allowed to start to oxidize before being exposed to heat that stops this process. With black tea, the oxidization process continues for a longer period of time.

For those who think that tea is a stuffy drink, the kind where a pinky is held out while taking dainty sips, Pinhasi said it is fine to slurp tea. Doing so, she said, allows air to be drawn in with each sip and helps to enhance the flavor of the tea.

There is also a way to get around the temperature differences for having the best cup of tea. That is to try an electric teakettle that enables the user to select a temperature, thus assuring the perfect cup of tea.

When it comes to coffee, there are staunch supporters of simply drinking the java straight up and not bothering with a bite.

That is how Marie Engel, co-owner and manager of J. Renee Coffee Roasters in West Harford, enjoys her coffee.

"When I come in in the morning I have my "Marie-acano." It's an Americano, they put a little spin on it. That's it for me," she said.

There are others, Engel noted, that prefer to eat something with their coffee.

Dried tea is a great way to enjoy a delicious, warm drink.

There are those who prefer to have something savory. The shop offers a Greek spanakopita, spinach and feta wrapped in phyllo dough.

"It's something to go with plain coffee," Engel said.

"People who like milk-based drinks like something sweet," she said, adding that these folks gravitate toward scones.

"It's a matter of taste," Engel said.

"What really sells, because our coffees are espresso-based, is biscotti," Engel continued. "They like to dip it in their coffee. It's very traditional. It's the Italian way." **GL**

Get *Cozy*

Your thoughts

Spring may be just around the corner, but winter still has a ways to go. And while the sun may be peeking out for longer, chilly days have folks searching for a bit of comfort, and what better way to warm up than with favorite foods? We decided to find out what your go-to comfort foods are. Here's some of what you said:

My mom's cinnamon toast, because she made it for me when I was sick.
– Ethan Reid

Homemade Italian food. Cooking always brings the family together and it's a fun time in our home making pasta, homemade chicken cutlets and meatballs.
– Kim Reid

My mom's baked macaroni and cheese. It's made with love!
– April Rudenauer

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Warm up

There's still time to get cozy by the fire

by Lynn Woike
LIFE Staff

Warm and cozy go together, and it's hard to be warm when heat is going up the chimney.

"The heat in your home is escaping up that chimney, even with a fire going," said Sherry Kozikowski, co-owner of Valley Fireplace and Stove in Canton. "The damper has to be open for the smoke to exit, but heat can exit, too. Generally, people leave the damper open all the time, so more heat escapes up the chimney."

For that reason, she suggests a glass door enclosure over the front of the fireplace that can remain open while enjoying a fire, and then closed for all other times.

Kozikowski also recommends installing a supplemental heating system such as a wood, pellet or gas stove that will not only stop the heat from escaping, it will become a supplemental heating system. From the time a choice is made to completed installation is one to two weeks.

"Gas is the cheapest," she said, which could be one of the reasons it's also the most popular.

"It's so easy," she said. "No hauling wood or pellets ... [and] it can come on automatically."

Avon Plumbing & Heating, located in Avon, has been installing a wide variety of gas log fireplace sets in new and existing homes and condominiums.

"It eliminates the hassle of burning wood and burns considerably cleaner," according to Stacy Moore, project manager and designer. "With the click of a button, you transform your fireplace into a beautiful, warm, glowing fire anywhere in your home. The gas fireplace sets can be installed with either propane or natural gas.

The project takes only a day, providing the chimney is clean and a gas line has already been installed.

Projects can take up to three weeks if additional renovations are desired, such as resurfacing or encasing the fireplace or adding a cabinet to hold a flat screen television above it.

"You can be creative," Moore said, because even if you do not have a fireplace in your home, you can add a gas firebox created from a metal hearth with a wood surround.

A fireplace will be the focus of whatever room it's in. Originally, their mantels were installed to catch smoke, but have since become more of a decorative piece.

"If you want to cozy it up," Hayley Bryden, a designer at Ehrlich Interiors in Farmington, recommended "replacing the basic shelf of a mantel with a large piece of reclaimed wood. To give more visual interest to this concept, try incorporating some ornate brackets underneath the reclaimed wood."

Building a surround to encase it is another decorating option.

"Bookcases are super cozy," she said. "They can be used to display much more than books and can be filled with family photos in decorative frames."

To accessorize, Bryden likes to place a large mirror over the fireplace. "It could be an antique if that's your style," she said.

Lighting, such as sconces on either side of the fireplace, can also add warmth, complementing the fire below.

To accessorize a wooden mantel, she said add iron, such as a large sculptured piece, along with a few smaller items.

But none of that is even necessary.

Just making a fire makes for a cozier atmosphere, said Kurt Wabrek, who with his wife, owns New England Patio and Hearth with stores in Canton and Wethersfield. Only three things are essential: dry wood, a poker and a spark guard. Grates, tool sets and screens come in a variety of styles, so that choosing them "is a matter of personal taste as well as function."

While it's common sense, he said it bears repeating that safety is key. The flue should be open before a fire is lit and ashes must be disposed of safely. **GL**

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Note from Nancy

The other women

Two women have moved into our home.

They're short and rotund, smart, fussy and handy to have around ... I think.

They have friends with names like Siri and Cortana. The black one is stationed in our living room, and the white one hangs out in my husband's home office downstairs.

Yes, Alexa, Amazon's all-knowing and all-powerful personal assistant, has invaded our space. My husband bought the first one with a birthday gift card, and our son gave him the second one for Christmas. They tell me this is just the beginning of a new technology revolution. Naturally, I'm resisting it. They're the family techies. Me? I just live here.

Alexa is fussy. All communication must start with her name and proceed according to a precise formula. Sometimes we talk about her behind her back and mention her name, which accidently calls her to action.

Her little blue ring lights up and spins around and she chirps happily. "I'm sorry. I don't understand what you're saying," she tells us. The conversation continues. "That's because we weren't talking to you," I reply, trying not to sound peevish. Her response: "I'm sorry. I don't understand what you're saying." "Alexa, shut up." "I'm sorry. I don't understand what you're saying."

Finally, my husband, who speaks her language far better than I do, says, "Alexa, stop" and she retreats to wherever she came from.

Obviously, she doesn't take rejection well.

As if all this technology weren't enough, I added to it by giving my husband a smart outlet that works with her. When our Christmas tree was up it was really convenient to say "Alexa, turn living room on" and watch the tree light up without having to bend over to flip the switch on the floor. Now we have the smart outlet connected to a light in the living room. That's also useful except when I forget and try to turn the light on manually, which of course doesn't work because we gave control of it to her-who-must-not-be-named. I remember, undo the damage, and try an order.

"Alexa, turn on living room."

Nothing. (Louder) "Alexa, turn on living room." Still nothing. (Screaming) "Alexa, turn on the [bleeping] living room!" Nothing. Alexa does not like being yelled at or hearing occasional bursts of bad words.

My husband hears the confrontation and arrives just in time to prevent violence. "Alexa, turn living room on." That gets us happy chirps and a glowing blue ring, and amazingly, the light goes on.

Got that?? The request must be exactly in this order: Name of digital servant, part one of the order (in this case "turn"), followed by location ("living room"), and ending with part two of the order ("on"). Deviate from that formula at your own risk.

All this griping aside, Alexa does have some talents that I really enjoy. She acts as a timer, tells somewhat corny jokes, provides the local weather forecast and traffic report, plays Jeopardy and can connect to the Food Network to come up with recipes. She can even call an Uber. She also plays music, although her idea of "dinner music" last week was not mine. Next time we'll be more specific.

As part of my research for this column, I did a search for Alexa's skills, which apparently include clever answers to oddball questions.

"Alexa, how many roads must a man walk down?" "The answer, my friend, is blowing in the wind."

"Alexa, how many licks does it take to get to the center of a Tootsie pop?"

"I've never made it without biting."

"Alexa, how do I get rid of a dead body?"

"Call the police."

"Alexa, see you later, alligator."

"In a while, crocodile."

I have a list of about 50 others. My new little friend and I are about to have a hilarious conversation.

– Nancy Thompson

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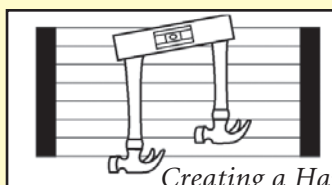

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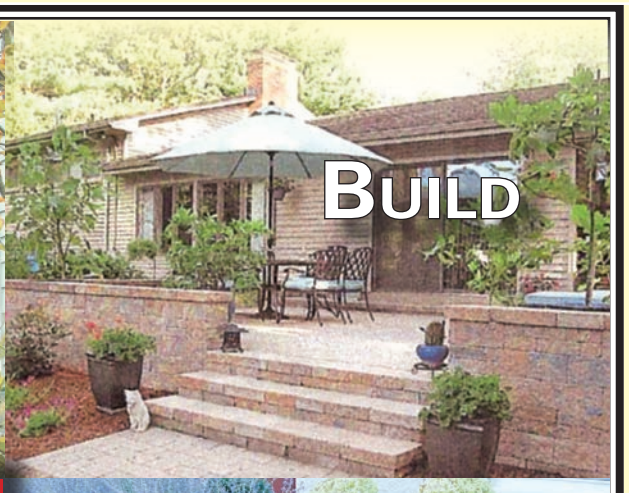

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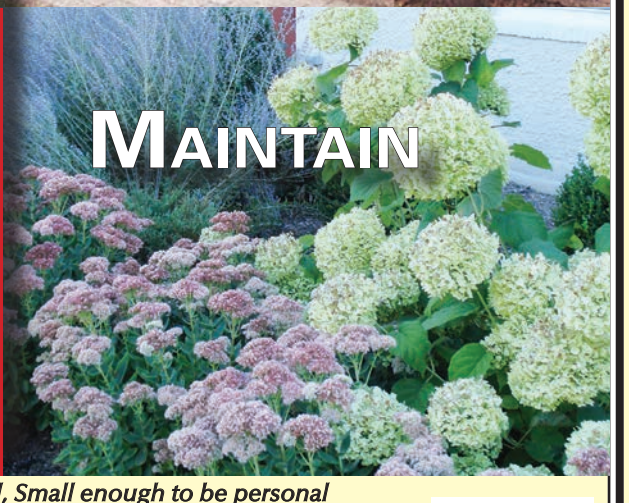

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BY MARK DIXON
WFSB METEOROLOGIST [AMS]

In like a lion, out like a lamb?

The month of March is one that can be beautiful, but also quite volatile here in Connecticut.

When it comes to temperature – on the first day of the month 24 degrees is the average low, 42 is the average high. By the end of the month, the average low goes up to 33 while the high warms to 54. Not a bad, as we transition from winter to spring, officially on the 20th (at 6:29 a.m.) with the Vernal Equinox. When it comes to the extremes of the month, the coldest temperature was achieved in 1967 and 2003 when the low was -6 (on the 19th and 7th, respectively).

Also since records have been kept, for the Greater Hartford Area, 89 degrees is the warmest it has been – on the 31st in 1998.

When it comes to snow, March is historically a month featuring some of the more notable storms. Take for instance the Blizzard of 1888, over 50 inches of snow fell in Middletown. Then more recently, there was the Storm of the Century (Storm Josh), on the 13th in 1993. An event that brought over a foot of snow, a lot of sleet, and a strong wind. So by no means are we immune to the bigger ones, but the average (based on a 30 year timespan) is just 6.4 inches. **GL**

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80 CARDINAL DRIVE

Glastonbury $749,900

Set in a cul-de-sac of fine homes, this custom home is immaculate, with a fully finished lower level, wine cellar, 1st floor master, 2-story great room and a very flexible floor plan. 5 beds; 3.1 baths; 4935 sq. ft.

158 RIDGE ROAD

Glastonbury $749,900

Custom French Country retreat designed with a very flexible floor plan; 1st floor master suite; fully finished extensive lower level with gym, sauna, media & billiard rooms. 4 beds; 3.1 baths; 4027 sq. ft.

32 JONATHAN TRAIL

Glastonbury $698,900

New Construction in Glastonbury at an unbeatable price, available now as a quick delivery home. Many upgrades throughout in this custom colonial build by Jacques & Sons. 4 beds; 3.1 baths; 3435 sq. ft.

162 RIDGE ROAD

Glastonbury $575,000

Nestled on top of a private enclave of fine homes, this grand home awaits! First floor au-pair/in-law possibility; fully finished walk out lower level boasts a 2nd kitchen & dining room, full bath, rec areas. 5 beds; 5 baths; 6595 sq. ft

27 LAZY VALLEY ROAD

Glastonbury $649,900

Beautifully maintained, inviting & amazing floor plan in this custom colonial, set in a private enclave of homes; fully finished lower level. 5 beds; 3.1 baths; 4116 sq. ft.

18 MENLO PLACE

Glastonbury $529,900

Last available new home at East Carriage Drive. Stainless kitchen w/ granite; hardwood floors & tiled baths; soaring great room w/ fireplace. 55+ Active Adult. 3 beds; 2 baths; 1967 sq. ft.

75 SACHEM DRIVE

Glastonbury $500,000

A truly beautiful home in cul-de-sac, featuring an open floor plan, lots of natural light & first floor master suite. 4 beds; 2.1 baths; 3149 sq. ft.

4 ADENA'S WALK

Glastonbury $464,810

Currently under-construction with quick delivery available at 55+ Active Adult community. Multiple sites and models to choose from, along with many upgrades available. 3 beds; 2.1 baths; 2266 sq. ft.

55 MARLBOROUGH DRIVE

Glastonbury $439,900

Custom home situated in a sought after neighborhood of exquisite homes; flowing floor plan spanning 4 floors of living space; finished walk-out lower level for poss. 5th bed. 4 beds; 3.1 baths; 3654 sq. ft.

1378 MAIN STREET

Glastonbury $329,800

The Historic Ebenezer Hale house, just minutes to South Glastonbury center. 3 floors of living; updated kitchen and baths. 4 beds; 2.1 baths; 2850 sq. ft.

348 NEIPSIC ROAD

Glastonbury $264,900

Warm & inviting ranch style home with open floor plan, 2 car garage, hardwood floors & fenced in back yard. Finished lower level & newer driveway. 3 beds; 1 bath; 1452 sq. ft.

We Have Glastonbury Rental Apartments & Homes Available. Starting at $1,500 Call us for more information.

DO YOU HAVE A HOME THAT FITS THESE BUYERS NEEDS?

- *Updated Home $1M-1.3M*
- *Main Street Home <$800K*
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- *Buttonball Area Home <$450,000*
- *Updated Home <$425K*
- *Colonial With 2-Car Garage <$350K*
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- *South Mill Cape Style Condo*
- *Waterfront Home - East Hampton*
- *Condo At Riverpoint, East Hartford*

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